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Sustainable Ethnic Tourism in Northern Thailand:
Challenges and Strategies

by

Juanita Christine McKenna ©

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

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McKenna

12912 - 119 Avenue
Edmonton, AB
T5L 2N3
Canada

Date: September 27, 1999

University of Alberta

Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled Sustainable Ethnic Tourism in Northern Thailand: Challenges and Strategies submitted by Juanita Christine McKenna in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Recreation and Leisure Studies.

Tom Hinch

Dr. Tom Hinch

Guy Swinnerton

Dr. Guy Swinnerton

Naomi J. Krogman

Dr. Naomi Krogman

Date: Aug 24, 1999

ABSTRACT

Alternative forms of tourism such as eco-tourism, adventure tourism and ethnic tourism have become popular options for a number of native populations attempting to participate in mainstream economic systems. In some cases, the addition of a tourism industry into these populations has created as many problems as solutions for them. The purpose of this study was to examine the sustainability of ethnic tourism in northern Thailand from the perspective of a selected hill tribe population. To achieve this goal, a case study of the hill tribe trekking industry in the Karen village of Ban Raummit was undertaken.

The findings of this study suggest that tourism in Ban Raummit faces many challenges such as managing the perceived authenticity of the attraction, controlling the development of an unplanned front stage (tourism district), addressing the needs of the changing tourist types, and dealing with a shifting ethnic balance within the village. At the same time, the trekking industry seems to provide an attractive and appropriate opportunity for the Karen people in this village to maintain a viable lifestyle within a rapidly changing Thai state. Thus, strategies to address these challenges and build a more sustainable industry for the Karen of Ban Raummit have been recommended.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is an agent for change. Any feature whether natural, built or cultural is impacted if it becomes a tourist attraction. When the feature is located within an indigenous community, these impacts often intensify. Its advocates have described tourism as a "passport to development" to be used by local communities wanting to integrate themselves into the broader economic system (deKadt, 1979). Others have been more critical and have classified tourism as a new form of colonialism because of the more negative attributes of the phenomenon (deKadt, 1979). Partly in response to this criticism, various types of tourism alternatives have emerged. These have come under titles such as eco-tourism, adventure tourism and sustainable tourism. However, many of these alternatives have failed to attain their stated purpose of consistently reducing the negative impacts of tourism development. Individual situations vary, and the success or failure of one approach in one region does not guarantee the same result in another place. Thus, the challenge facing tourism proponents and local communities today, is not to blindly embrace a particular type of alternative tourism, but to pursue those characteristics and processes of tourism development that make it appropriate for their particular situation.

Tourism development has been embraced by many indigenous communities as a means by which to participate in the shrinking global community. Choices such as this one have become necessary because of technological advances including improved communication and transportation. Those communities, particularly indigenous communities, which were previously undisturbed by the forces of modernization are now unable to avoid the impacts. As government induced changes such as roads and electricity are integrated into traditional systems, the local people are increasingly exposed to outside forces. Government regulations controlling deforestation, hunting, gathering and agriculture have severely restricted traditional lifestyles throughout the world forcing many tribal groups to become more sedentary. Further, tribal people are being introduced to health care and education systems that can improve their standard of living. As a result, traditional practices, religious beliefs and technologies are being questioned and altered to adapt to their changing situations.

Further exposure to external forces is facilitated by the improved transportation which makes these indigenous communities increasingly accessible to tourists seeking novel experiences. Their presence, in addition to the above forces, introduce commercial goods and services that were previously unknown in isolated places. As a result of all these changes, many tribal peoples are developing new wants. A problem emerges when they realize that their traditional economic system is unable to provide for these new desires. To resolve this problem, some communities are choosing to cater to the tourists in exchange for the cash income required for their participation in the new consumer economy and social systems to which they have been exposed.

Although tourism development is one strategy supported by many as an appropriate means by which tribal people can enter the global consumer society, it has not proven to be a panacea. In its various forms, tourism has been promoted as a way to create jobs, increase foreign exchange, improve the local infrastructure, as well as enhance conservation ethics and ethnic revitalization (deKadt, 1979; Sofield and Birtles, 1996). While these benefits are achievable, they have not been the only outcome. Instead, many tourism developments occur quickly and without adequate controls leading to situations of cultural disintegration, economic leakage and environmental degradation (Butler and Hinch, 1996; Cater, 1994; deKadt, 1979). As a response, some traditional communities are attempting various alternative tourism options such as eco-tourism, adventure tourism, cultural tourism and ethnic tourism.

These alternative forms of tourism are meant to decrease the negative impacts through smaller scale operations, increased local involvement, controlled pace of development, less infrastructure and fewer tourists. Yet, many operators and local communities are attempting to introduce these tourism alternatives without knowing the conditions, or appropriate characteristics, required to achieve the desired benefits. Uninformed tourists purchase these tours simply because the popular "alternative tourism" phrase is attached. As a result, problems may actually intensify because of the closer interactions between local populations and tourists. While mass tourism minimizes interactions between tourists and local populations by clustering the tourists in one area, alternative tourism endeavours bring the tourists into more environmentally and culturally sensitive areas (Cater, 1994; deKadt, 1979; Harron and Weiler, 1992). If not carefully planned and implemented, alternative types of tourism may perpetuate, or worsen, the exploitation that often characterizes mass tourism. These communities frequently find themselves with little control over the number of people that visit, the timing of these visits, or what the visitors see (Butler and Hinch, 1996; deKadt, 1979).

Background to the Study

Tribal People in Thailand

The preceding discussion highlights fundamental structural issues associated with alternative tourism development approaches in tribal communities. There are, however, many political issues as well. "Although it is argued that tourism should distribute its benefits to those who need it most, this is not possible if this is not a value of the national government's social and economic policies" (deKadt, 1979, p. 9).

The hill tribe people of northern Thailand face both types of challenges: structural and political. Most of the hill tribes are not indigenous to the area; Thailand is not their ancestral home. Rather, they have migrated from neighbouring countries such as Myanmar, Laos or China within the past 200 years. The hill tribes comprise about 1.3% of Thailand's total population, or about 790 000 of Thailand's 57 million people (McCaskill, 1997; Tribal Research Institute [TRI], 1995). Traditionally they live at higher elevations than mainstream Thai people. Most tribal villages are located 500m - 1500m above sea level. This elevation affects the type of agriculture practised. Each of the nine major tribal groups can be categorized according to the dominant type of agriculture in which they engage: pioneer swiddening (slash and burn), land rotation or wet rice cultivation (TRI, 1995). For example, the Karen people are widely respected for their traditional environmental conservation practises using land rotation, while the Hmong are recognized for the negative environmental impacts resulting from growing cash crops such as cabbage and opium with pioneer swiddening practices.

Less than one third of all tribal people have Thai citizenship, and even fewer own land. Thus, their political status is quite low. For the past 30 years, government policy regarding the hill tribes has been based on three perceived problems (McCaskill, 1997; TRI, 1995). First, hill tribes were considered a threat to national security. In 1959, the Thai government created the National Committee for the Hill Tribes in response to their fears of the spread of Communism in the tribal settlements. Second, the government believed, and continues to believe, that the hill tribes destroy the natural environment. It is estimated that between 1961 and 1994, Thailand lost 75% of its natural forest cover. Although the government has focussed on the impact of the hill tribes to explain this loss, others have suggested that between 1985 and 1988, 70% of this deforestation resulted from logging schemes while only 5% was a result of swidden agriculture (McCaskill, 1997). Third, hill tribes produce illegal narcotics. Reducing the amount of opium grown and used by tribal people in Thailand has been a major objective of government policy for the hill tribes.

In an attempt to resolve these perceived problems, tribal people have received substantial development assistance from governmental and non governmental organizations (NGOs). However, tribal people have had little input into either the planning or implementation of the projects (McCaskill, 1997). The result has been a paternalistic situation where outside organizations have devised solutions to tribal problems and implemented them. For example, the Royal Forestry Department (RFD) has relocated tribal villages to deter deforestation and protect watershed areas. Royal Projects initiated by Thailand's King and Princess, as well as other projects initiated by NGOs, have introduced new cash crops to reduce the growing of opium. Formal Thai education, electricity and new roads have been introduced into tribal villages to promote faster integration of the tribal people into Thai society. Although these economic and social advances have been appreciated, many tribal people indicate that their overall quality of life has not improved (McCaskill, 1997). Tribal people feel that this problem stems from a lack of respect and understanding of their traditional cultures. Officially, "the government's intention [is] to integrate these people into the Thai state and give them full rights to practice their religion and maintain their culture" (TRI, 1995, p. 2). However, policy and program development has been "related to some aspects of the hill tribes' way of life which are considered to be inappropriate to the present socioeconomic and political situation of the country" (TRI, 1995, p. 2). While the government officially states that the tribal people can maintain and practise their cultures, its programs are directed at changing their ways of life.

McCaskill (1997) states that "the acceptance and legitimacy of tribal cultures is problematic. Often they are considered potential impediments to development" (p. 40). The desire is to "improve" the hill tribes' quality of life by assimilating them into the Thai society and having them accept the Thai way of life. At the same time, certain colourful traits will be preserved, especially those that tourists come to see (Leepreecha, 1997; McCaskill, 1997; TRI, 1995). The hill tribes are an excellent tourist attraction (Cohen, 1996). Tourists from throughout Asia, Europe and North America travel to see and learn about these people. Their attraction appears to exist in the tourists' search for the "other" (Cohen, 1979b). People who feel alienated from their own society search for "real" experiences by visiting primitive cultures. Arts, crafts and ceremonies are very tangible and consumable expressions of these cultures. Because of the value associated with visible cultural expressions, tribal people are encouraged to maintain them. They are also encouraged to make them available for tourist consumption through the operation of hill tribe treks.

Hill Tribe Trekking

The characteristics of the current hill tribe trekking industry of northern Thailand reflect many of the structural and political problems discussed earlier. Cohen (1996) indicates that commercial trekking began in this area around 1970 as a small scale operation in which a limited number of people, mostly scientists, travelled to learn about the hill tribes. Guides were tribal people because only they knew how to access the villages. Growth occurred quickly though, and today there are more than 200 trekking operators in Chiang Mai, the major starting point for treks into northern hill tribe villages (Cohen, 1996; Dearden, 1991). As the number of trekkers increase, Chiang Rai and Mae Hong Son are also growing as major departure points.

The operators offer two different types of treks. The first is a tribal village tour in which most of the transportation is by van, bus or boat. These tours travel through northern Thailand stopping at various villages for short "picture opportunities." Typically, the tour consists of large groups (20-40 people) and last from one to three days. Alternatively, the jungle trek takes people into the forest to visit more remote villages that tend to be less modernized with fewer tourist facilities. These treks operate with an average of ten to twelve participants and last three to ten days. With both types of tours, the trekking company and guide will take care of the operational details including transportation, accommodation, food and luggage handling - all of which makes these tours increasingly accessible to more people.

Dearden and Harron (1994) estimate that more than 100,000 people participate in these treks each year for an average of three days. This visitation rate results in a total of more than 300,000 trekker days each year. In the context of Butler's (1980) destination cycle of evolution, Dearden (1991) suggests that hill tribe villages tend to move from initial contact to stagnation or decline relatively quickly (see Figure 1). Some of the factors affecting the rate of progression include accessibility of the village by walking trail, road, or boat, as well as its location relative to other attractions. The cycle begins for a village on the jungle trek when the trek operators make initial contact. These operators will continue to visit this village with their tours until it reaches a stage at which the tourists perceive it to be too developed or modern. As the number of tourists increase, the interactions between the tourists and the villagers become less authentic, or natural, and more routinized. The village may be rejuvenated as a destination on the tribal village tour if it is easily accessible by road or boat, but eventually it will be abandoned by the operators and thus, the tourists.

Dearden and Harron (1994) argue that this cycle is not sustainable. Some operators have responded by adding more components to the trek such as elephant and raft rides making it more adventure based. Although these changes make the industry more sustainable for the tourism operators, they tend to take the visitors out of the villages, thereby reducing the opportunity for economic development within the villages.

Although current practices do not support the sustainability of hill tribe trekking, Dearden (1991) suggests that "trekking, appropriately managed and with input from the hill tribes, could become a key component in sustaining these communities in the future" (p.412).

However, a prerequisite for effective management is for the people who manage the attraction to understand more about the factors causing the rapid progression of villages through

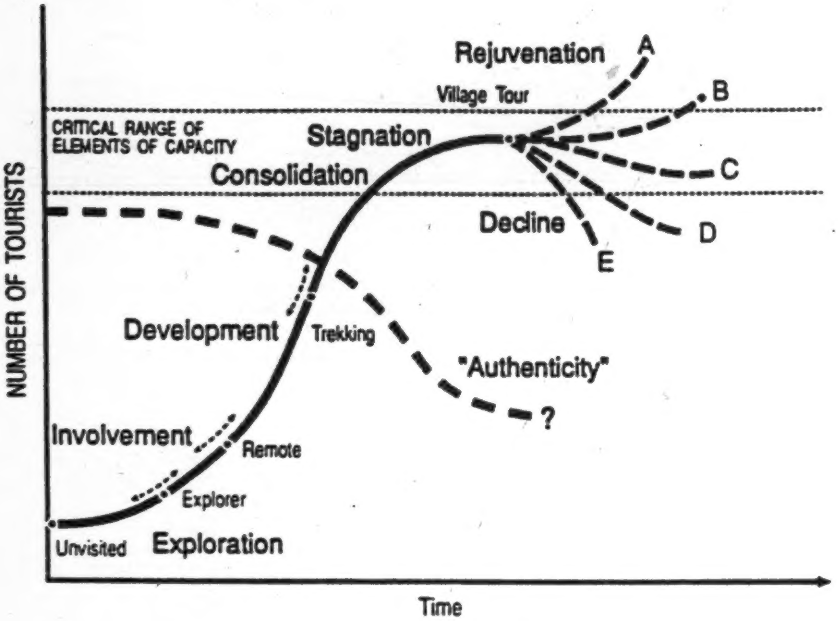

NUMBER OF TOURISTS
Time
Rejuvenation
A
B
C
D
E
Village Tour
CRITICAL RANGE OF ELEMENTS OF CAPACITY
Stagnation
Consolidation
Decline
Development
Trekking
"Authenticity"
?
Involvement
Remote
Explorer
Unvisited
Exploration

Figure 1. Diagram illustrating stages of development for tribal villages. From: Dearden, 1991, p. 403 (adapted from Butler, 1980).

Butler's cycle of evolution. Once these have been clarified, appropriate management changes can be initiated.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine the sustainability of ethnic tourism in northern Thailand from the perspective of a selected hill tribe population, the Karen. To accomplish this task, the following objectives will be addressed:

- to describe Ban Raummit as a tourism destination system in terms of its attraction, facilities, infrastructure and hospitality resources.
- to identify some of the challenges facing the sustainability of the tourism industry in Ban Raummit, and,
- to recommend strategies for a sustainable ethnic tourism industry in Ban Raummit.

Research Design

To access the perspective of the hill tribe population, this study was conducted using an interpretive research paradigm. This paradigm is "an approach to the study of the social world which seeks to describe and analyse the culture and behaviour of humans and their groups from the point of view of those being studied" (Bryman, 1988, p. 46). It acknowledges that the social world has multiple realities. The reality experienced by the hill tribes is different from that of other stakeholders, but as the group whose culture is the tourist attraction, and as the group most culturally affected, it is imperative to understand the situation from their perspective before making recommendations on sustainability.

Within the interpretive paradigm, the case study method was used. While conducting a case study, the researcher "explores a single entity or phenomenon bounded by time and activity and collects detailed information by using a variety of data collection procedures during a sustained period of time" (Creswell, 1994, p. 12). This method facilitated an open approach which allowed the flexibility required to conduct a study of a culture that was foreign to the researcher. It facilitated the use of various qualitative research techniques to gather descriptive information on one tribal group. These various methods give the data a depth that would not have been possible using only quantitative methods. This research design will be discussed further in Chapter 4.

Thesis Organization

Chapter Two, Conceptual Framework, familiarizes the reader with important concepts and theories related to development, tourism and tourists. Chapter Three, Situational Framework, introduces the reader to the Karen people by highlighting aspects of their history and customs, as well as their integration into modern Thai society. The reader will notice a change in writing style in Chapter Four, Study Design and Execution. This chapter is written in the first person to provide a more personal account of this researcher's journey through the research process. Ban Raummit: the Destination System, Chapter 5, describes the destination system of this village. Following this description, Chapter 6, Addressing Sustainable Tourism, explores some of the challenges facing the sustainability of tourism in Ban Raummit, as well as potential strategies with which to address these challenges. Finally, Chapter 7, Conclusion, summarizes the research study, discusses the research process utilized in this thesis, and provides suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER TWO

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter will provide an overview of the current state of knowledge and research in areas relating to this study. Issues of development will be discussed first. Next an overview of tourism concepts will be provided. This conceptual frame has been developed for the reader to better understand the starting point from which the research objectives were approached.

Development

The term "development" implies improvement, growth and change (Christenson and Robinson, 1989). With reference to international development, this term has had a primarily economic connotation; the growth desired is that of the market. Improvements in other areas, it is thought, will follow the predicted market growth. This perception has led to the understanding that the reason poorer countries have not prospered is market imperfection (Mikesell, 1992). As a response to this thinking, many developed nations have implemented foreign aid and development programs with the main focus of market growth. Projects have been directed at increasing the production of exportable goods without considering their appropriateness to the developing community. Projects that were planned and funded by more economically advanced countries, tend to have been guided by their own models of economic growth. Although many of these projects may in fact have initiated the desired market growth, they seldom resulted in lasting improvements because local people were not involved in the process. In the longer term, local people tend to benefit more from development projects in which they are involved in both the process and the implementation; more improvement will occur when they are able to play a leading role in their own change (Kampe, 1996).

One goal of true development is increased self-sufficiency which often requires a transfer of control over resources. Many powerful groups though, are not willing to release the needed control. Kampe (1996) argues that because the funding for development has come from governments, both local and foreign, the process is primarily political. Development officers report their actions to the organization for which they work - not necessarily the community. Kampe (1996) suggests this arrangement has not been successful because the main focus of the projects has not been people, but rather the following:

▸	Visuality:	You've got to be able to see it, to show it off
▸	Time:	You've got to be able to accelerate it, do it in a few years
▸	Logic:	You've got to be able to understand it by western reasoning
▸	Control:	You've got to be able to manipulate it, regulate it yourself
▸	Investment:	You've got to be able to benefit from it, ensure it returns to the Developer

These characteristics mitigate against local control of either the process or the outcomes. Each group planning change does so according to their own perception of improvement. Although generally well meaning, projects planned in this way often fall short of true development. The form that the "improvement" takes should be determined by the group with which the changes are enacted. The recognition of the validity of this criticism appears to be resulting in some tentative changes in the focus of development to include more than immediate economic considerations. Development is taking more of a future directed, social approach in evaluating its outcomes.

Sustainable Development

The idea of sustainable development has become increasingly popular since the publication of *Our Common Future* in 1987. This report defines the concept as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987, p. 43). Incorporated in this definition are two main concepts. First, the basic needs of humanity must be met, and second, limits to development are imposed by the current state of human knowledge and social organization. Since this fundamental definition was introduced, various others have been advanced. Norton (1992) suggests that

> sustainability is a relationship between dynamic human economic systems and larger, dynamic, but normally slower-changing ecological systems, such

> that: (a) human life can continue indefinitely, (b) human individuals can flourish; (c) human cultures can develop; but in which (d) effects of human activities remain within bounds so as not to destroy the health/integrity of the environmental context of human activities. (p. 106)

This definition will be the one used throughout this thesis. It acknowledges that sustainability is multifaceted. Economics, the natural environment, and culture are dependent upon the actions and reactions of each other for survival. Both human economic systems and ecological systems are dynamic with interactions constantly taking place between them.

The authors of *Our Common Future* also conclude that healthy development should be sustainable by focussing on a number of elements such as integration, charted development, cultural compatibility and local input (Farrell, 1990). The economic feasibility of the endeavour should be only one of the elements considered when proposing or evaluating a development project; its cultural and environmental impacts should be equally important considerations. Sustainable development need not be at odds with economic development, but financial development cannot be the sole determinant of development decisions. It cannot be based on the short term exploitation of the earth's resources. Proponents recognize that industrial and economic growths are required for survival, but within the sustainable development framework, they must also recognize that this growth needs to occur with a sensitivity to the intimately entwined environment and local communities.

While *Our Common Future* has generated a higher degree of environmental and social awareness and concern, certain aspects of its contents have been criticized. The findings of this report suggest that limitations to development are not fixed, but these limitations will change with the discovery of new resources and technologies. This phenomenon is known as the Principle of Infinite Intersubstitutability (Norton, 1992; Pezzey, 1992). Norton (1992) argues that this suggestion is misleading. Although in most cases, nature has, to this point, provided humanity with viable resource substitutions as others have depleted, there is little scientific evidence that this can continue indefinitely. There are limits to development.

In addition, other authors have argued that without further clarifications of the terms "sustainability" and "sustainable development," they will become buzzwords used only to gain public and political support (Gale and Cordray, 1994; Mikesell, 1992; Norton, 1992). As a result, various frameworks have been suggested within which issues of sustainability can be discussed. Munda (1997) suggests that the process of sustainable development through environmental management can turn into a process of conflict analysis. This suggestion acknowledges that various people and groups have differing views on what resources should be sustained, why and how. Gale and Cordray (1994) have introduced a typology outlining various types of sustainability resulting from four main questions.

1. What is sustained?
2. Why sustain it?
3. How is sustainability measured?
4. What are the politics?

Their typology recognizes that there are many different interests involved in the determination of sustainability. Each type has a different focus about what should be sustained, as well as different groups of people involved in the support of this ideal. For example, the sustainability of a certain forest ecosystem may in fact make the lifestyle of a local logging settlement unsustainable. While this typology identifies different types of sustainability, it does not suggest which one should take precedence in times of conflict, rather this typology aids in the framing of later discussions around the subject. To further clarify the measurement of sustainability, Norton (1992) has introduced a typology within which environmental risks and their consequences are compared. If it is determined that a certain action will create an inconvenience that is reversible, this action will be allowed. On the other hand, if it is decided that the action will create an irreversible catastrophe, this action would be prohibited.

The process of determining what should be sustained and how, demands that choices be made among alternative uses of resources. All industry is consumptive. Thus, it would be necessary to determine which use of the particular resource will yield the highest social value to the community and/or region (Mikesell, 1992). The typologies discussed above assist in making this determination by providing more information, but the final decision is a value judgement. Certain industries have taken the concept of sustainable development and attempted to apply it directly to themselves by consciously initiating more sustainable practices. This is an important step to take toward the overall goal of sustainable development, but it is equally as important to realize that no industry exists in isolation. Each resource used by one industry affects the resources available to others. Thus, it is necessary for the various industries to work together to develop a sustainable regional approach to development.

Tourism

Once the concept of sustainable development is accepted, a problem of how to operationalize it becomes apparent. In an effort to become more responsible, and realistically more profitable, certain industries have tried to develop standards to achieve the goal of sustainable development. Tourism is one such industry.

Sustainable Tourism Development

Under certain conditions tourism can be compliant with the requirements of sustainable development (Dearden and Harron, 1994; Farrell, 1990). In pursuit of sustainability, certain characteristics of sustainable tourism development (STD) have been proposed. Proponents argue that sustainable tourism should meet the needs of the local community, satisfy the demands of the tourists, and protect the resource that the visitor has come to see (Hunter, 1995; Pearce, 1995). These ideals can be achieved by limiting infrastructure development, limiting the number of tourists and allowing for increased local control (Dearden, 1991; Pearce, 1995).

While relatively intuitive, general acceptance of these characteristics is a slow process. Clarke (1997) has introduced a framework with four models to describe this process: polar opposites, continuum, movement and convergence. An initial response to the negative impacts of mass tourism was to propose an alternative. The "polar opposites" model represents this thinking. Mass tourism with its multinational corporations and huge developments was considered destructive, while smaller scale eco and ethnic tourism alternatives were thought to be better. However, the realization that smaller scale tourism could never sustain existing or future travel trends led to the need for a new model. Pearce (1992) acknowledges that there are many types of tourism with various characteristics, and that few of them were totally good or bad. Each tourism development exhibits its own level of positive or negative social and environmental impacts. Thus, the second model, the "continuum," is illustrated with mass tourism at one end and sustainable tourism at the other. Both of these first two models consider sustainability to be a possession of the tourism type; some tourism developments are sustainable while others are not.

The remaining two models consider sustainable tourism to be a goal. Tourism, like any industry has impacts. The scale of the development may lesson impacts in some areas, but increase it in others; thus sustainable tourism does not require the creation of a single alternative, but rather an attitude that encourages all tourism developments to become sustainable (deKadt, 1992). Butler (1992) states that the nature of tourism is such that without proper controls, it will create problems. All tourism operations, whether large or small scale, have negative impacts that need to be minimized with appropriate management decisions. Thus, the third model known as movement, recognizes that mass tourism, to this point, has had significant negative impacts. To address these concerns, movement from the current state toward the goal of sustainable tourism is required. The final model, "convergence," takes this idea one step further. For tourism to be sustainable, it must be appropriate to the situation. Certain locations or destinations simply cannot accommodate the demands of large scale tourism developments. At the same time, small scale developments tend to require the support of the infrastructure created by the larger scale developments (ie highways and airports) (deKadt, 1992; Lanfant and Graburn, 1992). This model recognizes a place for any tourism development, small or large scale, that strives toward the goal of STD.

The tenets of STD were created to guide the growth of future tourism projects, as well as to ensure the longevity of existing ones. While these tenets may promote the sustainability of individual attractions, Hunter (1995) cautions that, when considered in isolation from the relationship and dependancy that each tourism establishment shares with all other development and industry in an area, these characteristics do little to advance the overall goal of sustainable development. Tourism has no special rights. Its development needs to be considered a part of the overall industrial development of an area.

Like all industries, tourism is in competition for scarce resources. It depends on the use of fuels for transportation, materials for building the infrastructure, food for tourists, capital for investment, as well as human resources for staffing. As a result, tourism development needs to be addressed within larger local, regional and national plans. To be considered sustainable, resources should be allocated and consumed according to the best uses for the community. Tourism that protects its own attraction-based resources without considering the actions of competing resource users, can actually work against the ultimate goal of sustainable development rather than in support of it. For tourism development to be truly sustainable, it must be considered only one element of a community's economic system. Correspondingly, Hall (1995) states that the purpose of sustainable tourism development should be

> to extend, where appropriate, given certain economic, social and environmental objectives, the life-span of a destination and/or tourism product and keep options open by careful maintenance of the resource base for future use which, of course, may not include tourism. (p. 103)

The purpose should be to protect, and even improve, the viability of the environment and the community. This will ensure that the community is able to grow and prosper even after the attraction of the place for tourists has faded. Instead of the three requirements listed earlier, Hunter (1995) suggests that there should be only one requirement of STD: "that tourism development makes a positive contribution to all aspects of sustainable development, as far as is possible in any given time and place" (p. 164).

Ethnic Tourism

Many alternative types of tourism exist. One emerging option is ethnic tourism. Harron and Weiler (1992) define ethnic tourism as travel "motivated primarily by the search for first hand, authentic and sometimes intimate contact with people whose ethnic and/or cultural background is different from the tourist's" (p. 84). Intimate contact is achieved through direct interactions between the two groups, and the involvement of the tourists in the everyday activities of the culturally different group. Smith's (1996) definition is broader. She defines ethnic tourism as "the visitor industry which directly involves native peoples whose ethnicity is a tourist attraction" (p. 383). This involvement may or may not include the intimate contact and interaction suggested in the first definition. Although the culture of the ethnic group is still the attraction, this definition allows for more contrived tourist experiences. By accepting ethnic tourism as a form of modernization, cultures are, to a certain degree, agreeing to transform their culture into a tourist product (Lanfant and Graburn, 1992). Culture becomes a "mineable resource" to be exploited. Swain (1990) suggests that the ethnic group becomes an attraction by commoditizing its ethnicity through the production of certain goods and behaviors for tourist consumption. Once these have been commoditized, certain tourists may not experience the first hand and authentic experience for which they are searching.

Although similar to ethnic tourism, many authors (Harron and Weiler, 1992; Sofield and Birtles, 1996; Wood, 1984) differentiate between ethnic and cultural tourism. Wood (1984) suggests that, whereas ethnic tourism involves first hand experience with representatives of the foreign culture, cultural tourism involves more of an indirect exposure to other cultures through museums, galleries and artefacts. The focus of this study is ethnic tourism because of the intimate contact and interactions that are expected by the trekkers as they pay to enter the world of the hill tribes. Throughout this thesis the terms ethnic and indigenous tourism will be used interchangeably to refer to this phenomenon.

Objectives of Ethnic Tourism

Ethnic tourism is often promoted as an alternative form of tourism because it tends to involve fewer tourists and less infrastructure. In addition its primary purpose is not solely income generation. Instead, Sofield and Birtles (1996) outline the following objectives of indigenous tourism:

- to restore, protect and conserve the cultural heritage of the group (including the biophysical environment),
- to present chosen elements of their culture to visitors and others, and
- to transmit that cultural heritage to future generations of their own people first and others second.

Smith (1996) emphasizes the interaction between economic development, cultural growth and tourism development. She states that the goal of ethnic tourism is "to make tourism profitable and a mechanism to reinforce the traditional cohesive elements of their cultures" (p. 287). The objectives are therefore:

- to ensure that the values that bond the native society may endure as long as they serve the people well, and
- to establish the outsiders' respect for customs and values that support and guide a culture different from their own.

Both sets of objectives require a high degree of indigenous control. The objectives suggest that the indigenous people should choose the elements of their culture to be shared with others, as well as those elements not to be shared. Within the community itself these choices are often complicated by differing opinions. Yet, ethnic tourism controlled in this manner can be a vehicle for cultural learning, rather than domination. Butler and Hinch (1996) suggest that control by the ethnic hosts should be encouraged because the success of the attraction depends on a favorable attitude of the residents. Since the tourists enter the world of the ethnic group, this group has the ability to make the experience either positive or negative for the tourists.

Community Responses to Tourism

Frameworks have been developed discussing the various responses that communities may have to tourism development. Dogan (1989) has outlined five basic responses. The first, resistance, is characterized by enmity and aggression toward the tourists and tourist developments. Retreatism is characterized by the community closing in on itself and avoiding contact with the foreigners. Both of these responses have the potential to make the visitors feel unwelcome, or unsafe and unlikely to return. A slightly more neutral stance characterizes the boundary maintenance response. The community acknowledges the importance of tourism to the local economy, and reduces its negative impacts by establishing a well-defined boundary between tourist spaces and local spaces. Revitalization is another possibility. This response occurs when tourism aids in the revival of certain cultural practices that were previously in decline. The final response is that of adoption. Certain groups within the community welcome the changes brought about by tourism and work to increase these - even at the expense of their own traditions. This response may lead to a host population who becomes more like the tourists, and therefore less interesting as an "other."

Ap and Crompton (1993) outline other strategies that can be used by residents to respond to tourism impacts. The first, embracement, occurs when the residents eagerly accept the tourists and the perceived benefits that accompany these tourists. The second strategy is tolerance. Within this response, the residents exhibit a degree of ambivalence toward the tourists. The residents may also choose to modify their daily lives to avoid interactions with the visitors. This response is known as adjustment. Finally, the strategy of withdrawal occurs when the residents simply remove themselves from the community, even temporarily. The response that any community will take is neither homogenous nor static. Certain groups will initially accept tourism while others will not. As tourism develops further, those groups that benefit from it will view it in a more positive light than those who do not benefit. The responses of the community, or groups within that community, will affect both the visitor experience and the degree of tourism induced changes of the attraction system.

Attraction System

Leiper (1990) defines a tourist attraction as "a system comprising three elements: a tourist or human element, a nucleus or central element, and a marker or informative element" (p. 371). The nucleus of the attraction system may be any feature, or group of features, whether cultural, ethnic, historical, natural, or created. To be considered an attraction, this feature requires the visitation of tourists. These tourists are not drawn to an attraction by some mystical force, instead they are motivated to visit a destination by the belief that it will fulfill a particular want. Markers influence this belief by providing information to convince tourists that a visit to this destination will satisfy their wants.

According to Pearce (1991), a good tourist attraction

> is one in which the (visiting) public has clear conceptions of what the place is about, it is one where the activities in the setting are understood, accessible and excite public imagination. Furthermore, the physical elements which comprise the setting should be distinctive and aesthetically pleasing. (p. 53)

For this to occur, it is imperative that the nuclei are identified. All other aspects such as markers, transportation, and hospitality infrastructure must then be built to improve the visitors' enjoyment of the area by enhancing these central elements. While certain people visit a destination to experience something different, a crucial component of their enjoyment is often comfort (Boniface and Fowler, 1993). Many tourists want facilities with which they are familiar. At the same time, infrastructure that detracts from the central element serves to lessen the sustainability of the overall attraction by eroding its character. A balance between comfort and authenticity needs to be obtained.

Culture

Pearce (1995) states that tourism "must be managed in a way that protects the long-term viability and quality of the very resource the traveller has come to see" (p. 143). If ethnic tourism is motivated by the search for intimate interactions with people of different cultures, its sustainability depends on the respect and preservation of this attraction: the unique culture of the hosts.

Sofield and Birtles (1996) introduce two fundamental goals that confront the relationship between indigenous people and tourism development. The first is the "need to maintain maximum diversity of cultural heritage" (p. 396). To achieve this goal, different cultures should be allowed to develop alongside the mainstream society without being integrated into it. As an alternative to the integrationist approach, Goodland (1991) suggests the cultural autonomy approach which has the following characteristics:

- stresses the value of the tribal culture and the desire to maintain it,

- recognizes the harmful effects of unrestrained contact between the dominant culture and tribal culture and seeks to moderate them,
- creates conditions under which the tribal members themselves control the pace and manner of their adjustment to the national society and culture, and
- does not preclude the training of selected tribal representatives in the dominant culture and their role as mediators.

Goodland (1991) also argues that culture is a "dynamic reality that should be allowed to develop in a natural and progressive way" (p. 305). These objectives facilitate this evolution. The group needs to identify the unique elements of their culture which they choose to protect and develop. At the same time they must learn to work alongside the broader societal framework. Unique elements of culture are more than colourful dress, architecture and different languages though. McCaskill (1997) states that culture

> provides people of a particular society with a cognitive map based on a specific world view. It is a model of the natural and social worlds and humans' place within those worlds, as well as a model of the relationship, spiritual and physical to the cosmos. (p. 41)

Preserving certain colourful aspects of a culture while ignoring the history, situation and environment within which they developed, does little to protect the culture. While this threat is often appreciated, the implementation of tourism to protect cultures has done little to remedy it. Boniface and Fowler (1993) argue that

> there is a collision, actual and potential, in the arena of tourism between what is to a greater or less extent a fabrication and that culture which is, or has been, to a large extent unself-conscious, which develops 'in the wild' without training or template, being, essentially, a pure unadulterated product. (p. 12)

By making culture a tourism attraction, it becomes subject to market evaluation. Market studies are often done to determine what it is that tourists want to see. Then decisions are made to determine the image to be projected. What products will people buy? What, on the other hand, will repulse the visitor (Boniface and Fowler, 1993)? The industry's response to these questions often leads to issues of authenticity.

Authenticity

The second fundamental goal identified by Sofield and Birtles (1996) is "to retain authenticity and to minimize or even obviate cultural impacts" (p. 396). MacCannell (1973) makes a distinction between "authenticity" and "staged authenticity" in reference to attractions. Authentic attractions are real or naturally occurring, while staged attractions are performances or spaces created specifically for the tourists' benefit. Cohen (1988) argues though, that this definition of authenticity is inadequate, and the concept has been largely left undefined. It was expected that the social scientist would "understand intuitively what is meant by this" (p. 374). Instead he argues that "authenticity is a socially constructed concept and its social . . . connotation is, therefore not given, but negotiable" (p. 374). People's evaluation of the authenticity of a place will be individual based on their knowledge of the attraction, in this case culture, and their motivations for visiting the place. Those recreational tourists who want a simple escape from their lives will be satisfied with a somewhat contrived experience, while more existential tourists will want a pure, undisturbed cultural experience (Cohen, 1988). When considered this way, authenticity lies along a continuum with completely authentic at one end and totally contrived at the other. As with most continua though, it is difficult to find pure examples of either extreme.

Tourists make their own judgements of the authenticity of the attraction and use these in their, sometimes mistaken, evaluation of it. This has occurred in northern Thailand's trekking industry. As more trekkers visit villages, changes occur. Simple guest houses and shops may be built to accommodate tourists. Also, in the normal course to improve their own lives, villages may build roads, access electricity, and improve education systems. While these changes are all "real," tourists who equate authenticity with primitiveness may no longer be attracted to this destination. Harron and Weiler (1992) suggest that tourists prefer to "reconfirm their preconceived images of primitive or unusual people rather than confront real issues and change" (p. 86). As a response, the tribal people are forced to "act primitive" to continue attracting tourists. Goodland (1991) calls this phenomenon "enforced primitivism."

Part of this problem between expectation and reality is the result of incorrect messages being sent to tourists via destination promotions. Tourists are told that they will see traditional lifestyles and are disappointed when they see otherwise (Cohen, 1996; Dann, 1996; Pearce, 1995). As discussed in the introduction, the hill tribes of Thailand have been increasingly exposed to forces of modernization. Their villages are becoming increasingly accessible, and the people are becoming increasingly integrated into mainstream Thai society. The trekking operators and travel agents though, continue to portray them as unchanging, exotic and primitive. Cohen (1996) states that "the gap between the hill tribe image and hill tribe reality is thus growing in both directions" (p. 147). Trekkers are misled by the advertisements created by the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), the operators, and their guides. This false image portrayed by marketers has the potential to reduce visitor satisfaction and thus, the sustainability of the attraction.

Projected Image

Trekking operators and their guides have been among the most influential bodies in creating the image of the hill tribes (Cohen, 1989). In their quest to attract potential trekkers, Cohen (1989) suggests that the operators use a process of communicative staging to portray the hill tribe treks as "primitive and remote." Trekkers are convinced of this image through their communications with the trekking operator. Advertisements tend to be either simple pamphlets or information boards in front of the trekking operations (Figure 2). The content of these advertisements focusses on three facets of the trek.

First, a romantic image of the hill tribes is created. Tribal people and their villages are described as remote, timeless, unspoiled and exotic. The experience of the trek, the second facet, is developed through the description of the experiences that a trekker can expect to have. Trekkers can expect to encounter adventure, discovery and fascination. Cohen (1989) points out that the words "enjoyment and escape" are rarely used because these describe a more mundane and common mass tourist experience. The final facet of the ads is the nature of the trekking tour. Most travellers wanting to see the hill tribes claim to seek adventure and an authentic experience, yet few are prepared, or able, to accept the realities that this would include. In fact, there are a very limited number of places in Thailand where this type of an experience is still available. In the limited number of places where primitive villages continue to exist, access is very difficult and would demand more physical and emotional exertion than most trekkers possess for the adventure. Thus, trekking companies create an image of the trek as a real adventure where you will travel into the forests and live as the tribal people do, without any of the risks. They portray their company and guides as responsible and safe. At the same time, they create the image that the trekkers will go beyond just seeing the tribal people, to experiencing their world.

While trekking has become more popular and these images have been increasingly utilized to attract potential trekkers, the reality of the tribal situation has moved away from this image. Tribal people are experiencing a period of rapid change as they become more and more integrated into mainstream Thai society. They have not remained primitive for the enjoyment of foreign tourists. To compensate for this discrepancy, many operators have chosen to increase their communicative staging. "The 'work' demanded of the tourist advertisement then is . . . to convince the authenticity seeking tourists that the villages they are about to visit are indeed as 'primitive and remote' as the tourists expect them to be" (Cohen, 1989, p. 34). Cohen (1989) argues that there is very little outright lying, but a substantial amount of exaggeration, selectivity and misrepresentation is used.

During their interactions with the trekkers, guides continue the process of communicative staging. As the impacts of tourism and the modernization of the hill tribes increase, guides have been faced with a choice. Either they can provide interpretive information that supports the construction of a created tourist space, or they can admit to the discrepancies between the projected image of the hill tribes and their reality to maintain authenticity of the overall experience for the tourists (Cohen, 1982). Because many of the changes in the village have been relatively unrecognizable to most trekkers, many guides choose to continue the process of communicative staging, which in many cases has been adequate to preserve the positive experiences of the overall treks (Harron, 1991). The standard of authenticity recognized by most trekkers can still be satisfied.

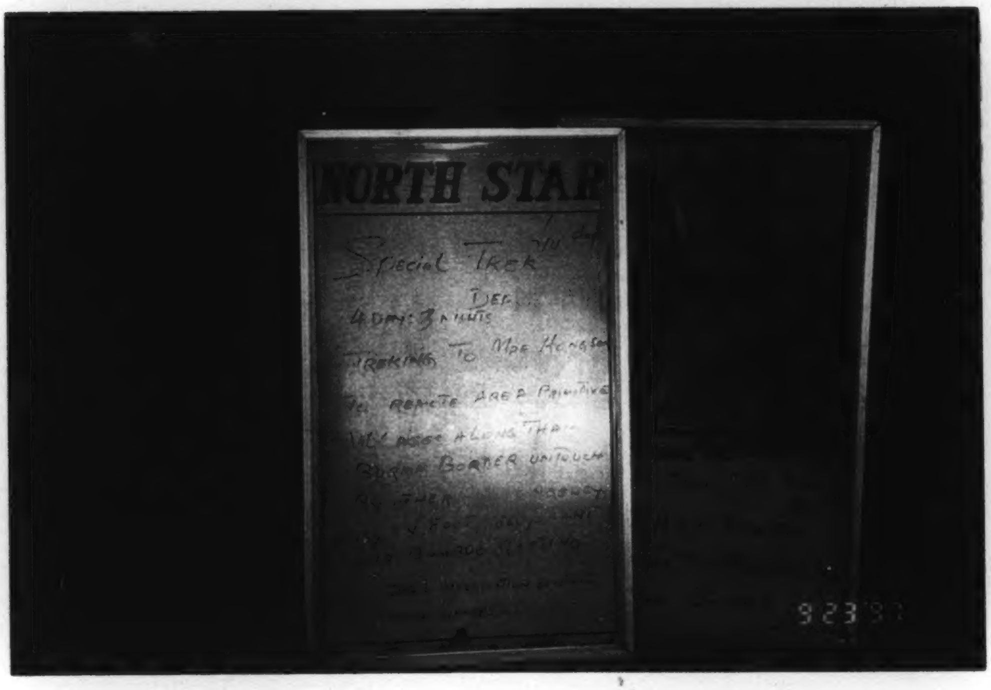

NORTH STAR
Special Trek
4 DAY: 3 NIGHTS
TREKKING TO MAE HONGSON
REMOTE AREA PRIMITIVE
ALONG THAI-
BURMA BORDER UNTOUCH
9 23 9

Figure 2. Photo of a standard trekking advertisement board in Chiang Mai.

Attraction Life-cycle

Many of the factors discussed above impact the popularity of an attraction. Craik (1995) states that tourism is about the redistribution of income. Money earned in one place will be spent in another. Further, Van-Raajj and Francken (1984) state that the expenditure of discretionary income on vacations is made with considerable time and effort. People's vacation choices are dependent on many factors such as lifestyle, age and income levels. One implication of these relationships is a volatile industry. Tourism choices are individual. In addition, these choices change as different areas become fashionable. Craik (1995) suggests that the increasing popularity of one place is often at the expense of another destination.

Butler's (1980) tourism area cycle of evolution illustrates this concept. He suggests that, like other consumer products, tourism attractions and destinations have life-cycles (see Figure 1). The cycle begins with the exploration stage. In this stage there are few tourists. Those that come use local facilities, as there are none built specifically for tourists. Hence, interactions with the local people are close, but they do not have a large impact on the community culture because the number of tourists is low.

Involvement is the next stage. This is characterized by an increasing number of tourists. Local people realize a potential for income generation and become involved in supplying certain facilities for the tourists. Contact between the two groups remains high, but increases for those involved in providing tourist services. The commencement of advertising to attract more tourists also begins at this stage.

The third stage is development. The initial attractions are developed further, and the amount of outside investment increases at the expense of the local involvement. Physical changes such as restaurants and accommodations in the area will become noticeable. Local resentment may emerge as a result of the increasing number of tourists and increasing outside control. Governments, both regional and national, tend to become involved in planning and marketing. The number of tourists begins to increase rapidly while the closeness of their interactions with the locals decreases and become more routinized.

The next stage, consolidation, is characterized by the solidification of a well-defined tourist recreation district. Many major franchises will be represented here, while local involvement becomes minimal. Growth slows with few new facilities being added. At the same time, tourism functions as a major component of the community's economy. The number of tourists during the peak season is often higher than the number of residents. Marketing activities tend to be wide reaching and focus on extending the visitor season.

Following consolidation is the stagnation stage. At this point, the carrying capacity of the region has been reached, or exceeded, possibly creating social or environmental problems. The destination image, though well established, may no longer be in fashion, and the tourists begin to frequent newer, less developed destinations. Over-development of the initial attraction is likely, and it rapidly declines in popularity. Those tourists who continue to come are often repeat visitors. Facilities experience frequent changes in ownership.

At this point, the destination may enter either a stage of decline or rejuvenation. Decline occurs because of a continuing decrease in the number of tourists. Many facilities have their roles altered to fulfill non-touristic functions. As this occurs, the destination becomes less and less attractive to other tourists. Local control may again increase at this point because of the decreasing value of the tourist properties. Alternatively, the destination may be rejuvenated. This can happen when previously untapped natural or cultural resources are introduced, or built attractions are created (eg. a Casino). Usually this stage requires a high degree of monetary investment. Pearce (1989) notes that the destination often carries the potential seed of its own demise if it allows commercialization to overtake the original attractive qualities of the area.

Cooper and Jackson (1989) suggest that there are two accepted functions for this model: a guide for strategic decision making and a forecasting tool. As a guide for strategic planning though, Cooper and Jackson (1989) argue that this model's value is limited. "At best [it] can assist general trend projection rather than causal forecasts" (p. 381). Because it is difficult to account for government policy changes, international events and changes in consumer choices, the stages are hard to identify until after they are completed. Rather, the shape of the s-curve is unique to each case to which it is applied, and can be a good descriptive tool in hind sight. The model can be used to identify the stages through which a destination has passed and some of the decisions that affected this cycle along the way. Another issue raised by Cooper and Jackson (1989) is the importance of the unit of analysis. One destination can be entering the decline stage, while another in the region is in the development stage. At the same time, if considered regionally, the decline of a certain destination can sometimes be explained by the decline of the overall region. In this thesis, it will be used as a descriptive tool to study the stages through which the village has evolved as well as a prescriptive tool to predict some possible outcomes of the current development trends.

Tourists

As a destination moves though the stages of its development, the type of tourists that it attracts, change. Models have been developed to describe these various types of tourists. Plog (1979) has developed a model based on the tourists' personality traits. Cohen's model (1979a) categorizes tourists according to the degree with which they relate to a spiritual center.

Plog's model (1979) of tourist distribution is based on psychographic characteristics of the tourists (Figure 3). He suggests that people with different personality types will visit a destination during different stages of its life-cycle. "Destinations move on a continuum, and a consistent basis, from appealing first to the allocentrics and last to the psychocentrics" (p. 68). Allocentric and near allocentric people are the trend setters. They like to visit destinations that are not well known, that are often quite different from their home, and that are often characterized by little infrastructure for tourists. These tourists will have a higher tolerance for, and even a drive to discover, the unknown. They visit a destination during its exploration and early development stages (Butler, 1980). As the destination advances in the development stage, Plog's (1979) mid-centrics become the dominant type. The mid-centric people, are the largest market segment. During the consolidation and stagnation stages the distribution of tourists consists of near psychocentrics and pscyhocentrics. These people make up the declining end of the market. They are not as adventurous as the allocentrics, and therefore wait until a destination is well known to visit it. They demand more tourist infrastructure that provides for many of the same comforts that they have at home. Thus, they would be comfortable visiting a destination in its later stages of development when many multinational companies are present, and the tourists can receive the same food and lodging found at home.

Another approach to classifying tourists has been developed by Cohen (1979b). His typology describes different tourists based on the experience they seek while on their trip. The five modes of touristic experiences are differentiated by the location of, or search for, the tourists' "spiritual centre." Those who identify well with their own society and seek only recreation from a vacation are called recreational tourists. Often these tourists are motivated by the four S's of tourism: sun, sand, sex and sea. Those for whom the trip is a temporary diversion from their own day to day existence are diversionary tourists. The third type is the experiential tourist. These people are aware of their differences relative to their hosts, but who enjoy watching and learning about the "other." Many of today's eco-tourists would fit into this category with their desire to learn while on vacation. The experimental tourists take this search for a "spiritual centre" one step further by experimenting with the other culture to seek more fulfilling life ways. Cohen's (1979a) description of the back-packer tourist would be an example of this type - those who travel to find themselves and a potentially better form of life. The final type is the existential tourist. These tourists actually adopt a new spiritual centre by attempting to become part of the "other."

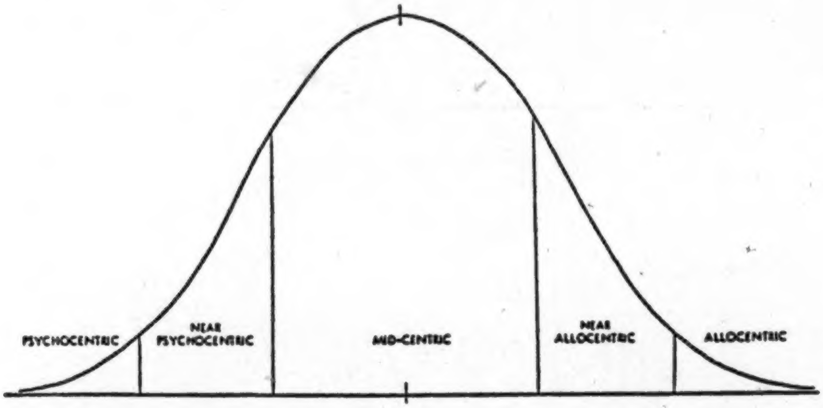


Figure 3. Plog's (1979) population curve of psychographic groups (p. 56). This graph illustrates the distribution of the different personality types.

Both Cohen's and Plog's tourist classifications will be useful in this thesis. They will help to describe the differing types of tourists who have visited Ban Raummit throughout its evolution as a tourist destination. The changing type of tourist will be compared with the increasing tourist infrastructure and perceived levels of authenticity to describe the relationships between these factors.

Trekker Motivation and Satisfaction

To ensure the success of any attraction, it is important to ensure that the attraction fulfils the expectations of the tourists who visit. Harron (1991) completed a study of the motivations and satisfactions of trekkers in northern Thailand. When asked why they wanted to participate in a trek, "seeing the hill tribes" was the most common response followed by "scenery," "get away from the city," and "seek new experience." People expressed a desire to see the tribal people and their way of life, yet in actuality, interactions between the trekkers and tribal people were limited.

Interactions between tourists and host societies are said to take one of three forms (deKadt, 1979). The first occurs when the tourist is purchasing a good or service from the host. The second occurs where the two find themselves beside each other, such as in a market or on the beach. The final type of interaction occurs when the two come face to face with the desire to share and learn with each other. Although this final type was one of the stated motivations of the trekkers, the current organization of treks is not conducive to these close interactions. The most common trek group size is 12 people, which limits the amount of translation that can occur because there is only one guide (Harron, 1991). In addition, the time spent in individual villages is minimal. Often the trekkers arrive in time for a short walk around the village, supper, evening entertainment and bed. The hospitality of the tribal people is becoming routinized, and more of the interactions resemble deKadt's first type based on monetary exchange.

Harron (1991) argues that an overall satisfaction with the treks comes from rather low expectations. Though motivations relating to "seeing the hill tribes" were the most commonly cited for taking a trek, there seems to be a decreasing emphasis on cultural interactions. In the post-trip questionnaires the guide and group compatibility were listed as the most important aspects of the trips. Activities focus more on the interactions between group members and less on interactions between the local people and the trekkers. When trekking began, most people would stay with the village headman, share meals with his family and enjoy cultural performances by his people (Cohen, 1982). Today tourists are housed separately from the locals, their meals are served on a platform made especially for them, and evenings are spent playing games and interacting with each other (Cohen, 1996; Dearden and Harron, 1994; Michaud, 1993). Interactions with local people tend to occur on a more business level through resident activities such as sales, begging, and service provision. A few villages offer specific cultural performances, but these must be special ordered by the guide, making the trek more expensive.

Maneeprasert, Potpong and Prangkio (1975) reported that the early trekkers had an almost academic interest in the hill tribes. They came to the villages to learn about or study the cultures of tribal people. Though primary motivations listed in Harron's (1991) more recent findings were similar, post trip questionnaires regarding satisfaction suggest different expectations. These findings indicate that the type of tourist is changing. There seems to be a shift from the existential tourist to the more recreational tourist. In reality, "it would seem that not-too-close an encounter for not-too-long-a-time is preferred" (Harron and Weiler, 1992, p. 86).

Tour Guides

As the tourists' motivations and activities have changed, so too have the responsibilities of the tour leaders. The role of the guides has evolved as the institutionalization of the tourist role has increased. Cohen (1982) outlines four spheres of guidance. The first two are outer directed responsibilities. These responsibilities relate to activities that the guide performs outside of the group. Firstly, the geographical sphere is the guide's responsibility to literally "find the way." The second sphere, interactional, refers to the guide's position as a mediator between the tourists and the local populations. The last two spheres are more inner-directed toward the actual group of tourists. The guide's role of informing the tourists of local points of interest and interpreting them in a meaningful way is known as the communicative sphere. The fourth sphere, social, has to do with creating group cohesion and facilitating conviviality among the travelling parties.

In the northern hills of Thailand, all of these spheres of guidance are to be found, but not necessarily all in one guide. Traditionally, Thailand's two types of guides have utilized different spheres within their respective roles. Cohen (1982) suggests that the town guides who operate the tribal village tours work more within the inner-directed spheres. Because routes are well marked, they do not need to "find the way." The villages that they visit are also accustomed to tourists. Thus, little mediating between the two groups is necessary. The role of these guides is more to ensure that the tourists enjoy their experiences through appropriate information and positive social interactions. Jungle guides, on the other hand, need to find the way through the jungle to locate the remote villages, some of which have not been visited by foreigners before. Their roles include convincing the villagers that these strange visitors mean no harm while trying to arrange for food and lodging for the night. Throughout Thailand, the outer directed roles are becoming less essential as more villages are exposed to outside forces.

These two types of guides differ in other respects as well. Town guides are often better educated than the jungle guides. They speak either fluent English or French to communicate with the tourists, while the language skills of the jungle guides focus on tribal languages. In the past, the jungle guides were not part of the Chiang Mai Guide Association (a professional guiding organization). They worked outside of the mainstream tourism system (Cohen, 1982). This situation has been changing. As authorities have begun to acknowledge the importance of jungle treks to the tourism system of northern Thailand, they have started to regulate these treks in order to make them more acceptable to the mainstream tourist establishment. Today, Thai regulations dictate that all guides must obtain a guiding license. To obtain this license, a professional guiding course must be taken at Chiang Mai University (Police Captain Achawapol, personal communication, October 18, 1997). This practice was introduced partly in response to problems reported by the tourists who complained that too little and often inaccurate information was being provided about the tribal people. They also felt that they were unsafe while with the guides.

This change is an indication of the increasing institutionalization of hill tribe trekking. Cohen (1982) argues that changes in the role of guides will vary in response to two factors: the degree to which the tourist's role is institutionalized, and the extent to which a developed tourist space has emerged. Fifteen years after Cohen's study, both of these factors have increased substantially. Thus, the communicative and social spheres have gained emphasis, while the importance of the geographical and interactional spheres have lessened. Harron (1991) found that even on jungle treks, the guide and compatibility of the trekking group were the two most important, and enjoyable, aspects of their trek.

Sustainability of Trekking in Northern Thailand

A number of studies have been undertaken to assess the impacts of trekking in northern Thailand, and its potential sustainability. Cohen's (1979a) early studies seemed to indicate that the impacts of trekking would be moderate. Trekking would provide a certain amount of additional income to the villages, but few destructive impacts would result because of the limited number and type of trekkers entering the villages. The industry has grown substantially since that time, and the impacts have intensified. Increased commercialization of the villages, begging, prostitution, opium usage, and exploitation, along with destruction of culture and authenticity are a few of the impacts that have been identified (Binkhost and vander Duim, 1995; Dearden, 1991; Maneeprasert et al, 1975; Michaud, 1993).

While these impacts have been noted, their effect on the popularity of trekking has been limited. The industry has continued to grow. The trekking operators have been able to respond to these concerns in various ways (Dearden and Harron, 1994). Typically, as one area became too "touristy" they were able to move to another. They have also been able to hide many of the village modernizations through limited amounts of both communicative and manipulative staging. Communicative staging, through the advertisements and guide information, has worked to convince trekkers that the villages they will visit remain primitive and remote. In some cases, manipulative staging has been used within villages to escape the discovery of the more obvious modernizations within the villages. For example, the tourists may only be shown certain parts of the villages. Finally, operators have altered their treks to include more recreational aspects effectively removing the focus from the hill tribes. These adaptations have been possible because of the changing type of tourists (Dearden and Harron, 1994).

Dearden and Harron (1994) state that "it is difficult, if not impossible, to foresee an ongoing, sustainable trekking industry based solely on ethnic tourism" (p. 98). While the hill tribes are faced with increasing changes in their environment, they have fewer options for adaptation available to them. Because of their lack of control in the present structure, tourism has often been criticized for being one of the causes of these changes. However, tourism properly recast, could be used by tribal groups as a tool to escape poverty and retain their culture. The challenge then, is to determine the changes that need to occur to improve the sustainability of this industry.

CHAPTER THREE

SITUATIONAL FRAMEWORK

As this research focuses on a culture and country foreign both to the author and many of the readers, it is important to develop a basic understanding of the cultural situation within which the research was conducted. This chapter will outline a brief history and some basic characteristics of the Karen people and their interactions with the Thais.

Karen People

Karen history and culture are rich. The purpose of this thesis, though, is not to provide an in-depth discussion of either. Thus, this section will only highlight the important characteristics of Karen culture from the perspective of tourism, especially those needed to facilitate a better understanding of later discussions.

Political History

Though many Karen people have been in Thailand for more than 200 years, they are not indigenous to this country. They have a long history of migrations. Legends suggest that the Karen people first migrated from Mongolia to what is now Myanmar (the name Burma was officially changed to Myanmar in 1988) in about 1125 BC (Sheppard, 1997). The Burmese people followed about 200 years later. Because the Karen are a peaceful people, they simply moved higher into the hills to avoid conflicts with the Burmese as they entered the region. For many years, there was little interaction between what became known as the lowlanders or the dominant group, and the highlanders. A certain degree of trade occurred as the highlanders would provide forest products in exchange for metals and rice (Keyes, 1995). The relationship that developed between the two groups was tense. It recognized the Karen as the original inhabitants of the area, but not the group with power.

This relationship changed with the British colonization of Burma (1886 - 1948). Keyes (1995) suggests that the early attention of the colonizers focussed only on the lowlanders, while the highlanders were left relatively untouched until the very late 1800s. When the attention started to focus on the highlanders, considerable changes began to occur in the hills. The Karen, as well as other ethnic groups, were recruited into the British army. Their positions of authority served to create tension between the Karen and the Burmese as the power shifted. Acknowledging the well-developed Karen system of organization and their assistance with the Burmese, the British allowed the relative independence of the Karen state within colonized Burma (Keyes, 1995). During this time, the Karen people were also heavily influenced by Christian missionaries from the European nations. These missionaries not only taught religion, but also created a written Karen script and taught the Karen to read and write the Burmese language. As the Karen became more highly educated, their aspirations for self-government increased accordingly. Throughout this time period, the British rulers did little to integrate the highlanders with the lowlanders and tensions grew.

After WWII, the British granted Burma its independence. The ethnic minorities who had been loyal to the Crown, including the Karen, expected Britain to acknowledge their assistance during the colonial rule and grant their right to self rule from the Burmese. This acknowledgement did not occur. In 1948 when Britain granted Burma its independence, the White Paper included nothing about the Karen. The Shan and Kachin (two other ethnic groups) were to remain under British rule for up to ten years (Sheppard, 1997). Because the nationalist desires of the Karen had increased during the colonial rule, they were perceived as a large threat to the national unity of a young country. Thus, the Burmese government tried to forcefully assimilate them. In response, the Karen held demonstrations and offered to share a joint state with the Mon (another minority), but neither were acceptable to the Burmese. Thus, the Karen insurrection began in 1949 and continues into the present. It has been one of the bloodiest, most violent and longest lasting fights of any ethnic minority.

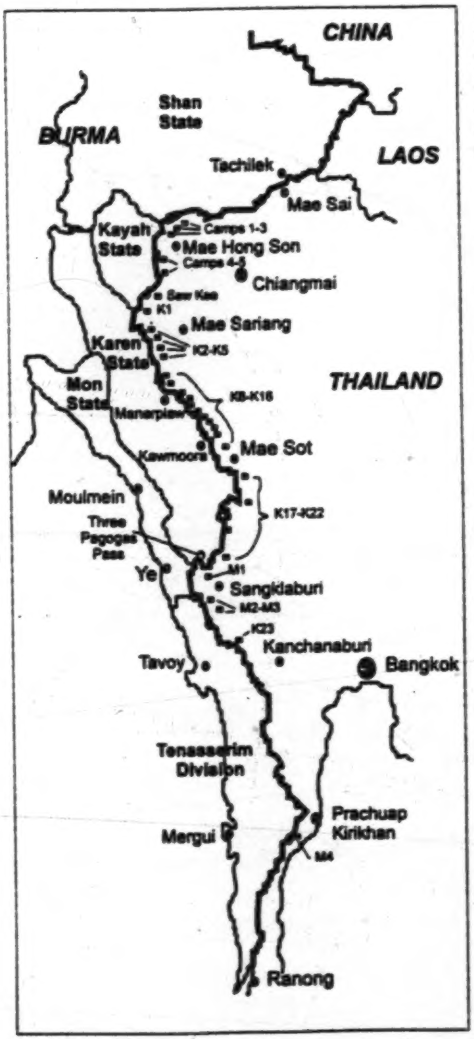
In the last fifty years, the strength of the Karen nationalist movement in Burma has fluctuated. As the movement has either strengthened or weakened, affiliations with various other political and religious organizations have occurred. Some of these affiliations created turmoil within the organization. During the 1950s, one faction called the Karen National United Party (KNUP), facing defeat by the Burmese government, aligned itself with the Communist Party of Burma (CPB). While this arrangement assisted in prolonging the survival of the KNUP, it led to internal conflict and division. Those Karen who left the

KNUP sought economic assistance from the American Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). Eventually the KNUP decided that the ethnic and nationalist goals of the Karen were not consistent with the mandate of the CPB and the two split. During these times of inner conflict within the KNUP, the position of the Burmese governments strengthened against a divided enemy.

The greatest support for the nationalist movement occurred in 1988 with the Great Democracy Uprising in Burma (Sheppard, 1997). Many activists, students, workers, and monks began to rebel against the inhumane practices of Burma's Ne Win military rule. As the government tried to end this uprising, many of the activists fled to the hills where they were assisted by the Karen people. These Burmese activists were impressed with the social organization and culture of the Karen people. Contrary to what had been taught in state schools, they found that these minorities were not savages or enemies of order. Together these groups continued to pressure the ruling military parties until, in 1990, democratic elections were held. Although a democratic party won the election, a new military regime, State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) would not transfer power.

Today, the fight continues in Myanmar. SLORC human rights violations have seriously hurt the nationalist parties. Many Karen from Myanmar are being forced to join their family and friends who had already fled to neighbouring Thailand to escape persecution. Until the 1950s, Thailand had few immigration laws, and many Karen had crossed the border freely. Today, there are stricter laws governing immigration to Thailand, and those Karen who choose to migrate are forced to stay near the border in refugee camps. The SLORC has seriously damaged the stronghold of the Karen in their state along the Thai border (Figure 4). As a result, this buffer zone within Myanmar has been lost, and the refugee camps in Thailand are becoming more dangerous places to reside. SLORC forces have been crossing the Thai borders to find and attack the refugees. Thai authorities are hesitant to protect the refugees as this practice creates tension in their relationships with Myanmar. At the same time, their unwillingness to protect these refugees creates negative impressions within other international communities (Sheppard, 1997).

In Thailand the Karen have faced different challenges. While many Karen are recent arrivals, others have been in Thailand for more than 200 years (TRI, 1995). Together with other ethnic groups living in the highlands, they have become known as the chao khao or hill tribes. The Thai government had few regulations governing the hill tribes until 1959 when the National Committee for Hill Tribes was created (TRI, 1995). This group began to address what was known as the "hill tribe problem" discussed in Chapter One. They categorized all


CHINA
Shan State
BURMA
LAOS
Tachilek
Mae Sai
Kayah State
Camps 1-3
Mae Hong Son
Camps 4-5
Chiangmai
Saw Kee
K1
Mae Sariang
Karen State
K2-K5
Mon State
K6-K16
THAILAND
Manerplaw
Kawmoora
Mae Sot
Moulmein
K17-K22
Three Pagogas Pass
Ye
M1
Sangklaburi
M2-M3
K23
Kanchanaburi
Bangkok
Tavoy
Tenasserim Division
Prachuap Kirikhan
Mergui
M4
Ranong

Karenni Camps	
Camp 1	629
Camp 2	1,615
Camp 3	2,057
Camp 4	222
Camp 5	1,448
Saw Kee	140
	6,111
Karen Camps	
K1 Mae Ye Hta	1,677
K2 U Da Hta	1,442
K3 Khlo Pa	1,200
K4 Mae Sa Guep	1,711
K5a Mae Kong Kha	2,560
K5b Ban Sala	1,461
K6 Huai Heng	0
K7 Mae Rama Luang	4,775
K8 Mae Ta Waw	0
K9 Mae Salit	0
K10 Shoklo	9,391
K11 Mae Plu So	0
K12 Kler Kho	0
K13 Kamaw Lay Kho	0
K14 Mae La	22,151
K15 Don Pa Kiang	2,933
K16 Wangka	6,356
K17 Mawker	5,653
K18 Ta Per Poo	1,927
K19 Nong Luang	561
K20 Nong Pa Htaw Wa	1,595
K21 Meteroke	5,077
K22 Hti Hta Baw	2,234
K23 Tho Kah	1,050
	73,774
Mon Camps	
M1 Halochanee	4,365
M2 Bee Ree	1,535
M3 Pa Yaw	3,900
M4 Pra Chuab	1,247
	11,047
TOTAL	**91,355**

Figure 4. Map displaying the distribution of indigenous refugee camps along the Burmese -Thai border. From: Sheppard, 1996, p. 604.

the different hill tribes together and began to develop policies and programs to apply to them as one group. Government agencies, NGOs and international aid agencies have implemented many programs that have greatly affected the traditional tribal lives of these groups. In addition, the blanket treatment of all tribal groups has ignored the differences among the various tribes and has tended to reduce the ability of individual tribes like the Karen to develop as distinct cultures. In some ways, these subtle development policies and projects have done more to reduce the nationalist aspirations of the Karen than the more direct assimilation efforts of the Burmese governments to the west (McCaskill, 1997).

Traditions and Change

As the physical, social, and political environments within which the Karen people live have changed, they have been forced to adapt (Keyes, 1995; McCaskill, 1997). This section will provide an overview of selected Karen traditions and some of the recent changes. As some of these more tangible traditions are the basis of the hill tribe attraction, changes in these impact the ability of the groups to attract tourists.

The village headman and the village committee are the traditional basis of political structure in Karen villages. The headman was, and continues to be, the major authority figure in the village. He had a council of well-respected elders to aid in decision making. While Karen society was egalitarian, the council members gained a degree of prestige because of their contributions to the community. In the past, the headman and council would choose village locations, sites for planting crops, and settle disputes. Many of these roles have changed as Thai regulations govern more choices such as village location. Instead, the role of the now elected headman is becoming that of an administrator for outside policy makers. Today, the headman and council are chosen for their ability to integrate with the state political system, rather than for religious or hereditary reasons.

Traditionally, Karen villages consisted of only people who share the Karen ethnicity. The homes were grouped according to the maternal lineage. In the past, other tribal or Thai people would rarely purchase land within a village. Recently though, this custom has changed in villages like Ban Raummit as they have become involved in more economic activities such as tourism. People from other ethnic groups are moving into Karen villages to access the economic benefits.

For many years the Karen have lived a subsistence lifestyle practising swidden agriculture. Unlike many other tribal groups, the Karen system of land rotation has been quite sustainable. This sustainability has been illustrated by their ability to remain in one location for many years (Trakarnsuphakorn, 1997). Normally, a field will be burnt and a crop planted one year and then left fallow for six to ten years, depending on the soil. When burning fields, the Karen leave the larger trees for shade and for erosion protection. In addition, the Karen burn large communal fields for all villagers to share, rather than smaller individual ones. This practice reduces the possibility of forest fires burning out of control. Currently though, this history of sustainable practices is being threatened. As the Thai economy grows, it is consuming more natural resources and forcing more of the lowlanders to search for farmland in areas previously the sole domain of the hill tribes. Few of the tribal people have title to their land because either they are not Thai citizens, or they do not have money to purchase it. As a result, they are forced to farm more marginal areas. In addition, the populations of the tribal people are increasing. Thus, the tribal people are trying to grow more for their increasing population on less, more marginal, land.

The relationship that many Karen share with the land is part of their traditional religion, i.e., animism. They believe that the environment is a system in which all elements are intertwined. Each element has a spirit that must be respected. In addition, the Karen believe that they themselves are inseparable from this system. For example, after a child is born, the parents wait for the umbilical cord to fall off. When this occurs, the cord is put into a bamboo tube and tied to a tree called "de-poh-tuh" in the community forest. The child's spirit is then said to reside with this tree creating an intimate tie between the two. The tree will not be cut down or damaged because of the belief that the child too would be affected (Trakarnsuphakorn, 1996).

Karen religious traditions and conservation ethics have developed together. In the past, they were inseparable, and changes in one sphere affected the other. As a result, the influence of the Christian missionaries has had an impact on the Karen's relationship with the land. The Christian missionaries started working with the Karen in Burma as early as 1826. They moved east into Thailand in 1882 (Maniratanavongsiri, 1997). The Christian missionaries experienced great success with the Karen people. Some attribute the willingness of the Karen people to accept Christian missionaries to connections between the religious stories of the two groups. Two Karen creation stories are surprisingly similar to those of Christianity (Keyes, 1995). The first says that Y'wa, the divine power who creates nature, planted one tree with seven fruits. The Karen were permitted to eat all but one of these fruits. But, a serpent convinced them that they should eat the "forbidden fruit." As a result, the Karen began to experience hunger and suffering.

The second story says that shortly after creation, Y'wa distributed a book that held the secrets of literacy and salvation. Each tribe received their own book. Legends say that the Karen people lost their book while burning fields. Consolation came with the Karen belief that one of their brothers from a foreign land would bring the book back to them and literacy along with it.

The connections between these stories and those of Christianity are easy to make. Thus, the missionaries used these similarities in their work with the Karen. Many Karen were eager to accept Christianity, not only as a religion, but as a tool for achieving a more comfortable life. The literacy and education brought by Christians to the Karen in Myanmar were also a driving force in their fight for sovereignty. For other Karen, Buddhism has also been popular for this reason. It is a way to access and gain acceptance to a more modern and higher status Thai society. Adopting the Buddhist religion is encouraged by the state as this is the official religion of Thailand.

The acceptance of these other religions has altered the Karen's relationship with nature. Because Karen religion and agriculture were intimately tied to each other, their land ethic depended on the belief that each element of the environment had a spirit that must be honoured. Now, there is only one God. Thus, their traditional practices and taboos are losing their strength as protectors of the environment. Buddhism allows more flexibility than Christianity so that certain rituals can still be practised.

Education is another element of Karen society that has experienced significant change. In the past, Karen traditions and culture were passed on orally. The elders had the central role in socializing the young. Elders would teach the rituals and songs that contained important lessens for all Karen people (Maniratanavongsiri, 1996). Karen songs which perpetuate some of the basic elements of Karen culture would be known in villages hundreds of miles apart. Increased contact with the missionaries improved the literacy of the Karen because the Christian missionaries had developed a written script for the Karen language and taught them to speak Burmese. As a result, these written languages became the dominant method of educating the young. At the same time, the religious systems of the Karen were also changing. As these changes occurred, the use of traditional Karen songs decreased since the songs often accompanied rituals that were not encouraged within Christianity. Thus, the Karen have moved from learning their beliefs and culture through the oral traditions of the elders' songs, to learning Christian messages through written word.

In Thailand children are taught to speak, read and write Thai. To improve the "hill tribe situation" many government schools have been opened in tribal villages (McCaskill, 1996). A major role of the government schools is socializing the children into the Thai state (Figure 5). While these schools are decreasing the illiteracy rate among tribal people, they also reduce the ability of the Karen to maintain their culture. The curriculum of Thai schools is formulated by the government, and all children regardless of ethnicity, are taught the same curriculum. A school built in one village will educate children from all tribal groups of a region: Lisu, Akha, Hmong, Karen and ethnic Thai. Children will leave their own villages to live in the village with the school for the year. Many do not go home except during Thai New Years for a short holiday. Thus, children interact with others from differing tribal groups, while Thai teachers play a more important role in their education than do the families. In addition, the Thai language becomes more important than their own (Maniratanavongsiri, 1996). As a result, the relationship between Karen people and the Thai state is changing. They are becoming more integrated into and more reliant on the state.

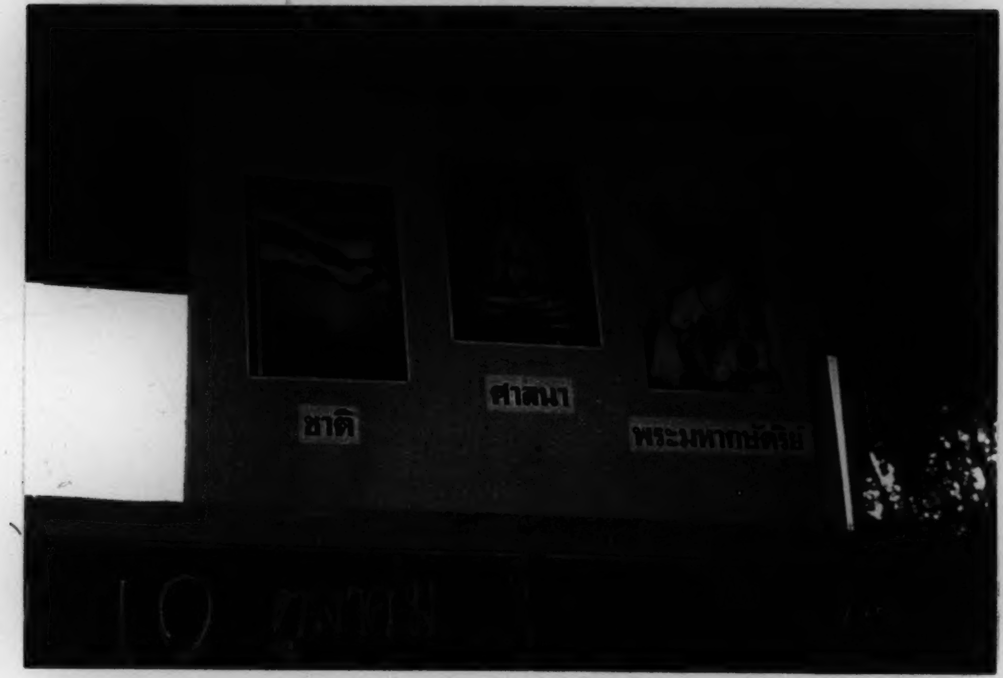


Figure 5. Photo inside a Karen classroom. The images shown include the Thai flag, Buddha, and the Thai King - all promote the socialization of the tribal students into Thai society.

Relationship With the Thai People

Because this research project focussed on a Karen village in Thailand, the remainder of this discussion will focus solely on the Karen in Thailand. The preceding discussion illustrates that the Karen are not a backward, savage people. They, in fact, have a well-developed culture and social structure. This culture, like many others today, is faced with incredible pressures to change.

When faced with the challenge of adapting to a more modern state, there are many examples of cultures that have not succeeded. Yet, Maybury-Lewis (1997) argues that this loss of culture is not a "natural law," but instead it is a political process. Cultures and people have the ability to adapt to change. Many of the problems encountered by these cultural groups are a result of government attitudes and policies, rather than their inability to change. Indigenous, or tribal cultures are often considered impediments to development, thus policies are often adopted to eliminate them.

Thailand, in its current state as a constitutional monarchy, is a relatively young country. As such, the government is, and has been, working to create and define a sense of nationhood (McCaskill, 1997). Within this process, hill tribes with their differing cultures have been viewed as a "problem." Thus, the relationship that has developed between the groups has not been that of equal appreciation. The Thai government argues that it has adopted a policy of integration with regard to the hill tribes. The hill tribes are able to maintain their identity while sharing in all the privileges of Thai society. At the same time, others would argue that their policies are aimed more at the assimilation of the hill tribes (Keyes, 1995; McCaskill, 1997).

The official relationship between the government and the hill tribes began in 1959 when the Hill Tribe Welfare Committee was created to deal with the "hill tribe problems" (TRI, 1995). Since that time, various groups have worked to eradicate the problems that the Thai people feel the hill tribes experience and the threats they pose within Thai society. While many positive initiatives have been completed, most have been without the input of the tribal people themselves. These development projects have assumed that the tribal people desire to be part of the mainstream society. McCaskill (1997) suggests that:

> Techniques utilized to support the gradual assimilation of members of minority groups include; induced acculturation through education, government services, mass media, economic opportunities in the language and lifestyle of the dominant society, urbanization, co-optation of minority leaders and encouragement of intermarriage. (p. 49)

Most tribal communities desire to have the conveniences and luxuries of the dominant Thai society. Access to these advantages is offered in exchange for acceptance of the mainstream Thai culture and values. Officially policy makers state that the tribal groups are free to practice their traditional cultures, while actual policy is making it increasingly difficult for these tribal groups to maintain their unique lifestyles. Children, especially, are accepting the Thai way of life to which they are exposed through the education system. They are taught that tribal ways are backward and damaging to the environment contradicting what they learn at home. The traditional generation gap between young and old is broadened as children learn less of their own culture and more of the Thai culture.

There are many other significant factors causing change in the Karen tribes of Thailand at this time. Government laws that forbid forest clearing for agriculture are forcing tribal groups to become more sedentary (Michaud, 1993). In addition, various cash crops such as strawberries and flowers are being introduced to the Karen who are traditionally subsistence farmers. Development programs promoting family planning, and missionaries teaching other religions are changing fundamental values. Improved transportation to the villages is exposing these groups to more outside influences. In addition, government bureaucracy is being integrated into village structures. These all serve to increase the "Thai-ification" of the Karen people.

Tourism too has played a role in this process. Not only do the tourists expose the tribal people to other ways of life, but the guides are traditionally Thai. In exchange for accommodation in the village, guides bring news of the Thai nation to the more remote tribes. The guides that visit on a regular basis are able to develop a degree of influence with the villagers. In addition, an extra cash income is generated through the villagers' participation in tourism.

While the expectations of young tribal people are expanding, the opportunities available to them are not increasing at the same rate. Employment, for example, is not adequate for the number of tribal people seeking it. Neither have the Thai people rid themselves of their prejudices against the tribal people (McCaskill, 1997). This situation creates an imbalance. While the minorities increasingly accept the values of the dominant society, they are continually denied full access to it (McCaskill, 1997). Thus, the Karen in Thailand are faced with many challenges. The main challenge currently facing the Karen need not be accepting that their culture is destined to disappear, but instead identifying ways to maintain it. Ethnic tourism may be one tool with which the Karen people can achieve this goal. One objective of this study is to identify characteristics of an ethnic tourism industry that may help one particular Karen community, Ban Raummit, survive into the future.

CHAPTER FOUR

STUDY DESIGN AND EXECUTION

Understanding the original design and the subsequent execution of this case study are important prerequisites to understanding the study's outcomes. This chapter will discuss the research site, methods of data collection, and data analysis applied in the completion of this study, along with some of the challenges inherent in these choices.

Methodological Approach

Berno (1996) states that cross-cultural tourism research should aim "to inform the native peoples who comprise the focus of investigation, as well as contributing to the academic field of research" (p. 393). To achieve the first objective, the research must be performed and presented in a manner that is meaningful to the population. To achieve the second, the research must be performed in a manner to ensure the trustworthiness and relevance of the findings to the situation under study (Creswell, 1994).

This study was completed using the interpretive paradigm. This paradigm is "an approach to the study of the social world which seeks to describe and analyse the culture and behaviour of humans and their groups from the point of view of those being studied" (Bryman, 1988, p. 46). In his discussion of tourism research, Cohen (1979b) states that the researcher must acknowledge whose point of view is being analysed: the researcher's, the host's, or the guest's. In this case, the Karen villager's perspective was emphasized. Although the input of others, such as tourists and trekking operators was valued, the purpose of this study has been to describe the situation from the perspective of the Karen. An important assumption of the interpretive paradigm is that there is not one underlying truth, rather that social reality is multiple and can only be defined by the actors in the given situation (Bryman, 1988; Creswell, 1994; Henderson, 1990). The reality experienced by the Karen people is very different from that of other stakeholders, but as the group whose culture is the tourist attraction and the group which is the most culturally affected, it is important to understand the situation from their perspective.

Within this interpretive paradigm, a case study design was chosen. This design facilitates the study of events within their real-life contexts (Yin, 1994). The foreign situation within which this research was conducted required the flexibility inherent in the emergent design of the case study. Yin (1994) states that "very few case studies will end up exactly as planned. Inevitably, you will have to make minor, if not major changes" (p. 57). The use of various methods within this approach is normal. For this study, the proposed methods included community consultation, in-depth interviews, participant observation, role playing and the review of secondary sources. The actual application of the various proposed methods in this study though, were largely determined by factors apparent only once access to the field was gained. Thus, the initial study design proposal and the actual execution of the research differed in certain aspects.

The proposal suggested a high degree of community consultation in determining the issues to be examined. Yet, once the research site was chosen, it became obvious that neither the time, nor the resources were available to accomplish this task in a village of more than 600 people. Instead, certain issues were identified in the literature while others emerged from interviews and observation. Once the issues were identified, in-depth unstructured interviews were to be used to clarify and add substance to them. Participant observation, on the other hand, was to be a minor method of data collection. As the situation unfolded, the limitations of using interpreters to conduct unstructured interviews became more apparent. Thus, semi-structured interviews and observation came to be of equal importance to the study.

The reasons for these changes will become clear later in this chapter. The "confessional tale" has become a popular way for qualitative researchers to report on their fieldwork (Creswell, 1994; Lofland and Lofland, 1994). Because the confessional tale is a more personal account of the research experience, it will be written in the first person. The following section will provide a story of my research experiences and of the choices I made while conducting the fieldwork for this study.

The Fieldwork

The case study approach allows for changes to be made to a study design while in the field. These choices are made by the researcher in response to conditions that are only identified once the fieldwork has begun. Because these choices impact the outcomes of the study, it is important that I identify and explain them.

Researcher's Role

As the information was gathered and analysed, it was filtered through my experiences. Although attempts to minimize the impact of personal bias on the collection, analysis, and presentation of the information have been made, this is an interpretive study and bias is a reality (Creswell, 1994). To help the reader appreciate the nature of my own perspective, the following paragraph will describe how the research topic was chosen.

In addition to the theoretical and applied significance of this research topic, it was selected due to personal interest. In 1991, I travelled to the Dominican Republic on a holiday package for two weeks. While there, I perceived a tension between the tourists and the local people. The local people were separated from the tourists except in controlled situations. They were not allowed to use certain areas of the beach, and this restriction was enforced by armed guards. Most interactions were based on some kind of monetary exchange. In contrast to this, I visited Ghana, West Africa in 1993 as a volunteer with a development project. The tourism industry was much less developed there, especially inland where I stayed. There was little or no tension between myself and the local people. Interactions were based more on learning and sharing. However, when I visited Ghana's coastal cities, there was greater evidence of tourist developments and greater evidence of tension between tourists and local people. I became interested in why this occurred. Tourism critics often argue that the primary cause of this tension is that locals receive few, if any, benefits from tourism, but often bare the majority of the costs (Cater, 1994; Dearden and Harron, 1994; Pearce, 1995). In contrast, tourism proponents argue that tourism can benefit tribal people, but they must identify and operationalize methods to gain more control over tourism and to obtain these benefits (Butler and Hinch, 1996; Pearce, 1995; Tisdell, 1996; Zube and Busch, 1990). I decided to investigate these issues of benefits, costs and control. Because tribal people often experience these issues most directly, I chose to investigate these issues from the perspective of a tribal group.

Site Selection

Prior to leaving Canada, it was agreed that the final site selection for this research would occur two to three weeks after my arrival in Chiang Mai, Thailand. Certain criteria were to be used in the selection process. The proposal described a small village entering the involvement stage of Butler's cycle of evolution (1980). At this stage, the village would have undergone initial contact and received some tourists. The villagers should have a basic understanding of the trekking industry. While they would not yet have initiated major changes in their village to accommodate these tourists, they would be considering the possibility.

In actuality, a site was not identified until five weeks after my arrival and the fieldwork did not begin until the eighth week. As my fieldwork in Thailand lasted 14 weeks, only 6 weeks were spent in the research site (see Table 1). This site, a Karen village called Ban Raummit in Chiang Rai province, was identified by Dr. Numchai Thanupon of Maejo University and Mr. Sumrauy Nhusaeng, a graduate student under his supervision. Mr. Sumrauy Nhusaeng is completing a Master's of Agriculture and Forestry Administration (MAFA) at Maejo University where he is investigating the impacts of trekking on tribal villages including my chosen research site. Ban Raummit was chosen as the research site for three main reasons. Firstly, Mr. Sumrauy is the Chief of the Watershed Management Area in which Ban Raummit is located. Obtaining official permission to do research here was facilitated by his authority in the area. Secondly, Mr. Sumrauy's official position and recognition in this region guaranteed me a degree of safety as a female researcher alone in this village. Finally, a total of three MAFA students lived in the general area and were able to assist with transportation to and from Maejo University in Chiang Mai when required.

Ban Raummit will be described more fully in the following chapters, but it is important to introduce it at this point. This village was not an ideal match to the parameters of the proposed research site. The population of this village was more than 600 people consisting of about 120 families - some Karen, others non-Karen. The trekking industry was initiated here more than twenty years ago and was very well established. The village appeared to be in the late development or consolidation stage of Butler's cycle (1980). It had experienced major physical changes as a direct result of the tourism establishment. Changes in case studies are to be expected, and they are not detrimental if the researcher maintains the focus of the research objectives (Yin, 1994). The purpose of this project was to examine the sustainability of ethnic tourism in northern Thailand from the point of view of a particular hill tribe population. This intent has been realized. It is important to acknowledge though, that the size and stage of evolution of this village are different from that outlined in the research proposal.

Table 1. Research time-line while in Thailand from August 24, 1997 to December 23, 1997.

08/24 - 08/31	Arrival in Thailand and orientation in Chiang Mai.
09/01 - 09/10	Time at Maejo University in Chiang Mai: literature searches, trips with eco-tourism students and interviews with local operators and officials.
10/11 - 10/19	Visits from University of Alberta professors: tour with Dr. Krogman and identification of research site.
10/20 - 11/29	Fieldwork in Ban Raummit.
10/20 - 11/04	Identification of an appropriate team of interpreters
11/30 - 12/06	Return to Maejo University: interviews with operators and data analysis.
12/07 - 12/23	Participation in a hill tribe trek and travel throughout Thailand.
12/24	Return to Canada

Gaining Entry

During this fieldwork experience, I found that gaining access to the research site occurred at two main levels. The first level was the formal permission to conduct research at the site which was granted by official decision makers, and the second level was more functional in that it required earning the trust of the local residents. Because of the political position of the Karen within Thai society, access to the first did not guarantee the second. The first level was actually the easier to achieve. Merriam (1988) states that "gaining access to a site begins with gaining the confidence and permission of those who can approve the activity" (p. 91). Gaining entry at the official level was aided by the presence of Mr. Sumrauy as the Chief of this Watershed Management Area. Because of his authority, the Village Committee of Ban Raummit agreed to allow me to conduct research in their village.

At this point, a short discussion of power relations in Thailand is required. This discussion is not meant to describe Thai society in depth, but it is meant to highlight a few points to help readers better understand the environment in which this research occurred. In his writing of Thai society, Mulder (1996) suggests that "the Thai social process does not deal so much with distinct individual personalities on their own merit as with ranks and status positions" (p. 65). Thai society is hierarchical and positions within this hierarchy determine the relationships between different people. Those at the higher levels with more power deserve the respect of those in lower positions. Ideally, the respect and humility of those in lower positions of power are reciprocated with benevolence from those in higher positions. If offended or disrespected, the more powerful party will normally retaliate in some way. "Showing respect and friendliness - and even more, submissiveness is therefore the only mechanism for defence for those who are without power" (Mulder, 1996, p. 70). Although the Karen people are not Thai, they are becoming increasingly integrated into the Thai society. Their positions as they enter this hierarchy are relatively low. Thus, their relations with Thai people are, in most cases, subordinate and complex.

Though the assistance of a high ranking Thai government official had facilitated official entry to this village, it may actually have hindered my ability to access the perspective of the villagers at a more personal level. This second level of entry was more difficult to achieve because of my formal association with the Thai officials. I spent the first weeks in the village observing and interviewing, but an inconsistency between the interview responses and observations became evident. At times, respondents would answer certain questions with hesitation. As I became more involved in village activities, this seemed to change. I spent time playing with the children, teaching in the school, going to the rice fields, trying Karen tools and eating Karen foods. Villagers noticed these activities and those who were previously too busy to be interviewed, would make their time more available.

The reasons for this change became more clear during one interview. One of the key respondents who had been interviewed at the beginning of my fieldwork agreed to a second interview. His responses to some of the questions during this second interview were dramatically different from those given in the first interview. When questioned about these changes he replied that in the beginning villagers thought that I was a government official and did not want to tell me the truth about their lives here. They had fears that the information provided would create more tensions with the Thai government. My acceptance by the villagers though, came only two weeks prior to my departure from Ban Raummit. Thus, I was not able to learn as much as I would have liked. Gaining the trust of the respondents was a time-consuming component of this fieldwork.

Interviews

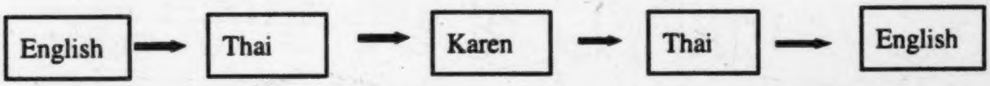
Informal, semi-structured interviews were one of the major data collection methods in this study. The fundamental purpose of interviews is to gather descriptive data, in the respondent's own words (Creswell, 1994; Howe, 1988). Berno (1996) also notes that in cultures with oral traditions, interviews are one of the most appropriate methods, as the people are comfortable sharing through verbal discourse. Many of the Karen people are illiterate, and the use of a written questionnaire would have been foreign to them. Because of the language barrier, most interviews were conducted with the assistance of interpreters.

The nature of this research project made choosing an interpreter difficult. First, the linkage program between Maejo University and the University of Alberta with which I was affiliated dictated that my interpreter was to be chosen from Maejo University's eco-tourism program. Second, because the project required the interpreter to stay with me in the village, Thai culture dictated that she must be female. Third, the case study design of this study dictated that extended periods of time were needed in the village, and the interpreter was required to leave her home and classes to stay in Ban Raummit. While the chance to work on this project in Ban Raummit was viewed as an attractive opportunity by many of the students, it was a challenge to coordinate. In addition, the interpreter needed to possess a clear understanding of the issues being investigated so that she could avoid and/or detect any mis-communications during the actual interviews. Given these challenges, it took three weeks before an appropriate team of two interpreters was identified.

While the interpreters were a valuable source of assistance, information, and support, they had limitations related to their ability to conduct unstructured interviews. They were unable to follow the nuances of the English language which meant that they could not easily translate my probing questions once the answer to an original question was provided. They needed a more structured interview protocol to be confident in comprehending and asking the questions. Thus, the style of interviewing changed as the project progressed.

In addition, translations were always summaries of the response; a verbatim translation was not provided. A further challenge to communication occurred with the Karen villagers. For these people, Thai was their second language. Thus information was essentially translated through three languages before the summaries were provided. To minimize the possible impacts of these translations, the interview notes, once typed into my computer, were reviewed by the interprete3rs to verify that these were the responses that they had received.

Table 2. Illustration of steps in translation process.



The interviews had two forms. The first was casual conversation with people during their daily routines, and the second was more formal semi-structured interviews. The semi-structured interviews were built around a core of structured questions which were developed from the literature as well as issues that emerged through observation and previous interviews. As each interview was entered into the computer, I would have more questions that needed clarification. These would form the basis of subsequent interviews. Thus, more in-depth information was asked of the respondents, both new and repeat respondents, but not in the same interview.

Interviews were conducted in locations convenient and comfortable for the informants. In the village, this often meant one of the local restaurants or the respondents' homes. Many of the Karen people were illiterate. As a result, written consent forms were not used. Instead, at the beginning of the interviews, my interpreter explained to each participant the purpose of the data and ensured the confidentiality of the information they provided. Because these interviews were conducted through interpreters, there was sufficient time between responses to write the summarized translations. Thus, a tape recorder was never used. Timing of the interviews worked quite well. Those people involved in either agriculture or tourism were busy working during the day. Thus, most of the interviews occurred in the evenings, after the day's work was completed. This practice allowed me to concentrate on observing the tourists during the day.

Interviews with government officials and operators were sometimes conducted in their offices in Chiang Mai or Chiang Rai. During these interviews, I took hand written notes and entered the information into the computer at a later time.

Informant Selection

Purposive sampling was used to identify people to interview. As a starting point in the village, those people most directly involved with the tourism establishment such as the headman and elephant managers were interviewed. Then as new issues arose, other relevant individuals would be approached. An attempt was made to achieve a cross section of the villagers, including a young person, an older person, those people directly involved in the tourism industry, as well as those people not directly involved.

Participant Observation

Observation became an essential data collection method in this study. My role was that of an observer as participant (Junker in Merraim, 1988). The villagers were aware that my primary purpose in the village was as a researcher, yet I also became involved in various other village activities such as teaching in the school and attending a funeral. Although, not my initial intention, the participation in these other activities was essential to gaining the trust of the villagers as research participants.

One of the most difficult aspects of this method of data collection was choosing what to observe. As the trekking establishment was the focus of this study, most of my time was spent observing these areas. Some of the best spots for observation included two restaurants located along river where the boats landed and the elephants were loaded. The boat landing area itself was an excellent spot to observe the arrival and departure of tourists, their interactions with the children, and conversations with each other.

Tourists arrived in the village during the day, thus observations were done at this time. Only once during my stay did a tourist spend the night. When I first began to observe the villagers and tourists I carried a note book to record observations during the day and entered these notes into the computer that evening. I noticed that this practice made people uncomfortable; they would look at it as they walked by, or sit further away from me. About two weeks into the fieldwork, I chose not to carry the note book any longer. During the day, as important things would happen, I would return to my hut and jot notes down in private, rather than carrying the book with me. This practice seemed to make people more comfortable around me. Villagers were more willing to talk with me and sit nearby.

The observations helped to generate both information and questions. Certain observations verified information given in previous interviews, while other observations served to develop new questions that required clarification in subsequent interviews. Thus, the use of both interviews and observation was complementary.

Other Data Sources

Other data sources such as advertisements, promotional brochures and government documents were also collected and analysed. These sources were analysed to determine the image that was portrayed of Ban Raummit and the Karen people. This analysis facilitated a better understanding of the visitors' expectations of the village which was then compared to the reality of the situation. Government documents were used to supplement information about the village such as the size, date of receiving electricity and income levels.

Data Analysis

I collected an abundance of data during the fieldwork portion of this research project. Interviews were conducted with villagers, various tourism operators, and government officials. Though each of these interviews helped me to develop an understanding of the trekking system of northern Thailand, all sources were not treated equally during analysis. As the primary purpose of this project was to assess the sustainability of ethnic tourism in Ban Raummit from the perspective of the hill tribe population, the Karen data formed the foundation of the analysis.

The analysis of this data consisted of four main processes: coding, sorting, local integration and inclusive integration (Weiss, 1994). *Coding* was used to identify key statements and organize these into categories. While some of these categories were predetermined by areas highlighted in the literature, others emerged from the data. These categories were then *sorted* into themes. Once themes started to develop from the coded data, the process of *local integration* began. This process was used to summarize the main themes and attempt to give them meaning. Meaning was generated by identifying possible relationships and comparing these with subsequent data until the thematic categories used in this discussion emerged. The final step of *inclusive integration* was used to bring these semi-autonomous thematic categories back together to create a story that was relevant to the situation in Ban Raummit. While these processes have been presented as separate, they were not. As themes developed, I would go back to the interview transcripts to determine if the coding was accurate and supported the themes, and then return to the themes with any revisions. The process was not linear.

To facilitate these processes, a computer package, QSR NUD*IST (Non-numerical Unstructured Data * Indexing Searching and Theorizing) was used. This computer package made the potentially overwhelming task of bringing order to the large amount of data more manageable. The interviews and field notes were completed in the Word 6 program while in Thailand. They were later imported into NUD*IST and coded individually. Because of difficulties with the translations provided for interviews, NUD*IST was not used to its full potential. The translations that I received for data were not verbatim. As I worked with my translators, we learned to understand each other. The NUD*IST program was unable to account for the subtleties of communication and understanding that had developed between the three of us. As a result, the development of categories and themes was done from hard copies of the coded data rather than from within the program.

Reporting

This project has applied as well as theoretical significance. Thus, in addition to the traditional method of reporting these research findings in a thesis, they will be presented to the people of Ban Raummit by way of a summary report. A transcribed version of the summarized findings will be presented to the Village Committee of Ban Raummit. As I only have access to Thai translators and the committee members have been educated in the Thai system, the translation will be to the Thai language. To better protect the identity of the respondents in this study, none of them have been named in the thesis. Quotations from villagers' responses to interviews are used throughout Chapters 5 and 6, but none of the respondents are specifically identified.

Verification

In interpretive studies the questions of relevance and trustworthiness are used in place of questions pertaining to validity and reliability (Guba, 1981). Two strategies were employed to address these two criteria. The first was triangulation. By utilizing interviews, observation, and other data sources, data gathered with one method were compared to data gathered by the other methods (Creswell, 1994; Howe, 1988; Seidman, 1988). Secondly, peer examination was utilized (Creswell, 1994; Guba, 1981). As thematic categories were created and expanded, these were discussed with people familiar with the tourism industry in general, as well as those more familiar with the Thai situation. These people have included fellow graduate students in Canada and Thailand, as well as professors. The discussions with fellow graduate students have been rather informal, while the review by professors has been more formal.

Delimitations and Limitations

In the previous sections I have discussed the significance and design of this study, but it is also important to identify the study's boundaries (Creswell, 1994). This section will address this issue in terms of the delimitations and limitations of the project. Delimitations narrow the scope of the study or define what is not being investigated, while limitations identify some of the potential weaknesses of the project (Creswell, 1994).

Delimitations

Thailand is home to nine major tribal groups who have a population of more than 790,000. This study has examined the sustainability of ethnic tourism in one Karen village, Ban Raummit. As a result, issues highlighted and discussed with relation to Ban Raummit may be similar to other villages, but the generalizability of the findings is not implied. Sustainability is dependent upon each host community, its culture, the environment, and industry stakeholders which vary from place to place. At the same time, concepts and issues discussed in this thesis may be similar to those experienced by other groups. Other villages are encouraged to consider, discuss and amend these concepts to parallel their individual situations as they face similar pressures to modernize and adopt tourism as a component of their economic system.

Ban Raummit is only one component of a complex tourism system. This case study examines the sustainability of tourism in this village and attempts to determine some of the desired characteristics for its continued growth here. It must be noted though, that the tourism establishment of this village exists as one stop on a tour circuit. Although, its survival depends on the survival of other components of this same circuit, these were not studied in depth.

In addition, tourism demand is greatly affected by more global forces. Influences such as Thailand's political situation, acts of terrorism and crime have an impact on the visitation of tourists to Thailand. Because these forces are not easily predicted or controlled, they were not considered in the data analysis for this thesis.

This study also recognizes that the influx of tourists caused by the development Ban

Raummit as a tourism destination is only one of the numerous pressures affecting the Karen culture. Other major agents include Thai governmental agencies, foreign aid and NGOs implementing development programs, as well as global forces including technology, education and the media. Although some of these key influences have been identified, it is beyond the scope of this study to determine and examine the full range of forces affecting hill tribe cultures and structures.

Limitations

Conducting research in a foreign country is difficult. Concepts of time, confidentiality and topical issues differ. These differences created some challenges for my study. I was in Thailand from September to December 1997. While there, my time was divided between Maejo University in Chiang Mai and Ban Raummit, my research site. Although I had planned to spend 10 weeks in Ban Raummit, access to this site was not secured until late October, thereby allowing only six weeks of fieldwork in the village. This short period of time limited both the amount and the nature of data collected. As time went on, the trust of the research participants was gained, and the responses provided to interview questions seemed to become more insightful and honest.

In addition, all interviews with villagers were conducted through an interpreter. My interpreters' translations were given as summaries of the interviewees' responses rather than verbatim records. This limitation needed to be considered while completing the analysis.

Finally, many of the interview respondents were not Karen. Important community members and power holders such as the Police Captain, school teachers, and shopkeepers were of either ethnic Thai or other tribal descent. Yet, as people integrally involved in the tourism establishment, their input was required to determine the sustainability of tourism in this village.

This chapter has provided an overview of the research site, data collection methods, and data analysis of this research project, as well as its boundaries. This information forms the basis from which the study findings can be understood.

CHAPTER FIVE

BAN RAUMMIT: THE DESTINATION SYSTEM

The first objective of this thesis was to describe Ban Raummit as a tourism destination system. This chapter will address this objective. First, an historical overview of Ban Raummit will be provided. Next this chapter will describe the existing destination system of this village including the attraction, facilities, infrastructure and hospitality resources. This description will be followed by a discussion of the evolution of Ban Raummit as a tourism destination.

Village History

To better understand how the existing tourism destination system evolved, this section will provide a brief history of the village of Ban Raummit. This historical summary has been developed from the villagers' responses to interview questions. As a result, many of the dates are not exact, but they provide a basic order of events.

> This village was created about 35 years ago. Mr. Oo gave the name to this village. He was the first man to build here. The group of people that lived here came from Mae Tro in Chiang Mai province. It was near Doi Inthanon. There were four families that left this place [Mae Tro] because of opium and they did not want to smoke it so they left.

While the village was originally named for the first man who lived in the area, as most Karen villages were, the name was recently changed to Ban Raummit. Raummit is a Thai word meaning a mixture. The name change occurred to reflect the changing nature of the village given the multiple ethnic groups now living in the community.

Around 1962 the original four families who had left their village in Mae Tro chose to settle here. This particular site was chosen because "this land is good to make agriculture. Have good farm. It is near the river." Its location along the banks of the Mae Kok River in Chiang Rai province made it a favoured spot because of the accessible water source and plentiful fish supply for villagers (Figure 6). In addition, the forests were rich and the land was fertile. These traits fulfilled all the Karen's requirements to continue their subsistence lifestyle. A few other locations further north were considered before choosing this site. Traditionally, Karen villages are located much higher on the mountains. "Now there are not as many Karen people high up on the mountain because the government has told them to come down. They believe that it is bad for the environment to have the people live up high near the water source." Today more than 120 families live in Ban Raummit.

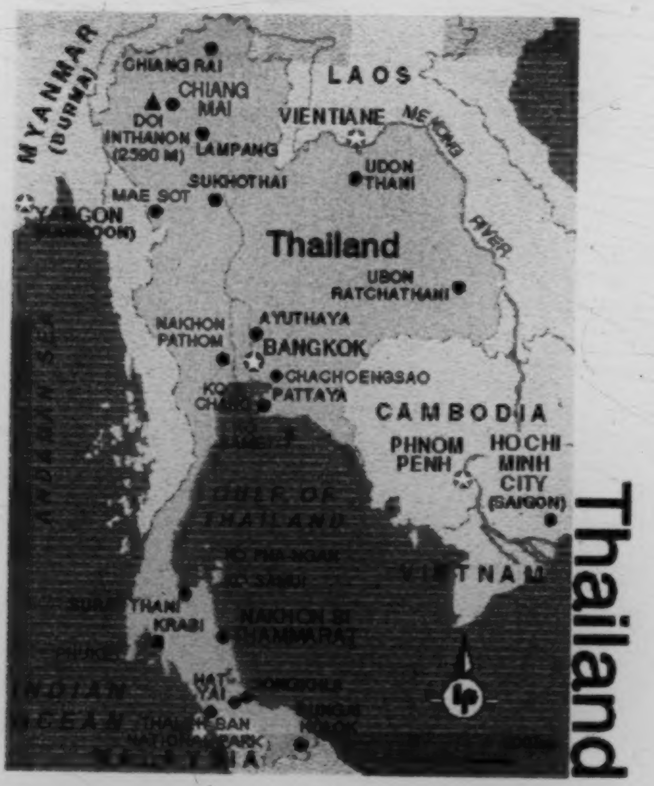

MYANMAR (BURMA)
CHIANG RAI
CHIANG MAI
DOI INTHANON (2590 M)
LAMPANG
LAOS
VIENTIANE
MEKONG RIVER
UDON THANI
SUKHOTHAI
MAE SOT
YANGON (RANGOON)
Thailand
UBON RATCHATHANI
NAKHON PATHOM
AYUTHAYA
BANGKOK
CHACHOENGSAO
PATTAYA
KO CHANG
CAMBODIA
PHNOM PENH
HO CHI MINH CITY (SAIGON)
ANDAMAN SEA
GULF OF THAILAND
KO PHA-NGAN
KO SAMUI
SURAT THANI
KRABI
NAKHON SI THAMMARAT
PHUKET
INDIAN OCEAN
HAT YAI
SONGKHLA
THALE BAN NATIONAL PARK
VIETNAM
MALAYSIA
Thailand

Figure 6. Map of Thailand showing the locations of Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai and Doi Inthanon. From: Lonely Planet [on-line]. Available: http://www.lonelyplanet.com.au/dest/sea/graphics/map-thai.htm.

About ten years after the creation of the village, the area was placed under the control of Thailand's Royal Forestry Department (RFD). It is not considered a national park, but rather, it is known as a forest conservation area. This jurisdictional change impacted the lives of the Karen villagers in many ways. Village boundaries were defined which dictated where the Karen people could live and farm. Outside these boundaries the RFD restricts the amount and type of land that could be used for agriculture (Sumrauy Nhusaeng, personal communication, November 15, 1997). They also control the distribution of land titles. Technically people are not allowed to own the land in the conservation forest, but the Karen feel that some are allowed to purchase it. This concern is voiced in the following statement.

> The villagers want to have the documents for the land, but when they ask the RFD they cannot. They will not sign because this is a conservation forest. But, if the person has money, they will get the documents.

The RFD also controls the types of services that may be provided in the protected area. Electricity was not brought to Ban Raummit until a visit from Princess Prathep Ratana Ratasana. Although not an elected official, the Princess has the authority to initiate many development projects.

As a result of these changes and restrictions, deforestation subsided, but pressure on the existing agricultural land has increased as population increases. In addition to births, more people have continued to settle in the area and make increasing use of the existing agricultural land. The crude birth rate of northern Thailand is 14.83 with a crude death rate of 6.97. The actual population growth rate .79, but the tribal people are considered to have higher than average birth rates (National Statistical Office, 1996). A significant contributor to population growth in this village is immigration. Karen villagers make a distinction between the different groups of people moving into Ban Raummit.

> People that move here have two styles. From Mae Tro, they come because they have family here and they give them the land to come here. Another group that want to sell. They are not Karen. They buy the land to do the shops for sell from the Karen people, but not buy the land to do the farm.

For the first 10-20 years, the village grew at a moderate rate. Those people who moved to this village were mostly Karen who were related to the first families who came from Mae Tro. The headman gave each family a parcel of land to farm. An older villager described the process by stating that "after one year he said that he want everyone in this place to go and choose the land where they want to live and farm. The headman will share it with the others so they will have one rai [land measurement] for each family." The settlers were happy with their homes and wanted to share with their brothers. Though the headman gave the people land to farm, they did not own it. Only Thai citizens can own land, and most of the tribal people were not, and still are not, Thai citizens. The original families that settled this village were given the title papers which verify ownership of the land around 1987. Currently, there are about 50 families that own land in the village, but not all of these are Karen. Some Thai people, along with people from a few other ethnic groups, have bought land here. Some of them live and work here, mostly in the tourism industry, while others use it as a vacation spot.

Basic services in the village also increased slowly during this time. The first school was built in Raummit in 1975. Volunteers from Julalongkan University in Bangkok came to teach in the village. Today it is run by the government and it services the surrounding villages as well. "The first church built 1 kilometer from here. The Karen would walk to that church. Then it changed to be built in this village about 20 years ago. It was built by missionaries from the United States." These missionaries still come to this village on a regular basis to give "shirts, blankets, mosquito nets and other stuff." A permanent tourist police station was built in 1983. Most of the officers have been Thai. The police presence was needed partly in response to some problems with robberies and shootings of trekkers near the Burmese border. This problem has all but disappeared in the last 10 years.

Destination Status

A destination system consists of the attractions, facilities, infrastructure and hospitality in a location. Each of these aspects will be discussed in relation to the system of Ban Raummit.

The Attraction

The nuclei of an attraction system are the central elements of a destination that tourists come to see:

> The North of Thailand is indeed one of the most charming areas in Southeast Asia and a visit to it would be incomplete without venturing out to experience and enjoy the mountains, the forests and the unique lifestyles of the hill tribes.
>
> (Guntala, A. and Puapratum, K., 1992, p. 1)

This quotation sums up the attraction of northern Thailand in terms of the combination of mountains, forests and unique cultures. Markers or descriptions such as this one motivate tourists from all over the world to visit northern Thailand. Once in the north, some of these tourists choose to visit villages like Ban Raummit. This particular village receives a large number of tourists. Because there are no controls over entrance to this village, the exact number of visitors is impossible to determine, but the following information from the records of the Tourist Police and the elephant operators provides an indication of the magnitude of the tourism here.

When trekking began in this region during the mid 1970s, tourist arrivals were irregular. One villager noted that these trekking groups would normally be limited to five or six people. When totalled, the number of visitors in a month averaged about 20 people. In contrast, during November 1997, the time period in which the fieldwork for this thesis was completed, more than 2500 tourists visited Ban Raummit. Of this total, more than 1800 people rode the elephants. Tourism in this village is seasonal, and the number of visitors fluctuates. November would be considered an average month. A villager explained that "July and August are the busiest. March, April, May and September are the slowest." Because access to Ban Raummit is more difficult during the rainy season, the number of tourists decreases during these months.

Most tourists visit Ban Raummit to experience tribal cultures such as the Karen people's, and to see the surrounding environment including its mountains and forests. These two characteristics comprise the nuclei of this attraction system and will be discussed separately.

Tribal Culture

Tourists come to Raummit in anticipation of seeing the colourful dress, tasting the exotic foods and experiencing the Karen way of life. They tend to see the lifestyles of tribal people as different and exotic. Many tour companies and individual travellers consider tribal villages to be an opportunity to get a glimpse of the "other" and their "simple" life (Cohen, 1988). The Karen village of Ban Raummit is one opportunity for tourists to fulfill this objective. For a few tourists, hill tribes would be considered the primary attraction of northern Thailand. For most, because of the limited amount of time spent in the villages, it would seem that tribal people are a secondary attraction that they choose to see during their stay in the north. Tourists also come to see Buddhist temples, Thai culture and the environment.

Ban Raummit offers certain opportunities for interactions with the Karen. First, this is a real village where people live and work. Tourists walk through the village watching and often photographing the Karen as they carry out their daily activities. In response, the Karen have formalized the display of certain traditional activities for the tourists. One such display is weaving. Some Karen women have set up weaving displays along the river to demonstrate their craft. While this is a form of cultural sharing, they also hope that the tourists will buy the woven belts, bags and sarongs.

The more energetic tourists may venture outside the village to watch the farming activities of the Karen. Those who do make this effort, photograph and video tape the farmers as they plant, tend or harvest the rice. Those tourists who attempt to communicate with the Karen are often welcomed into the fields to try their hand at the activity (Figure 7). During their visit, some tourists who come in smaller groups may have the opportunity to speak with a Karen person. Tourists in smaller groups are more likely to have this opportunity because they have better access to their guide who is required to translate between the tourists and the local people. In a large group, this communication is often not possible. One man in particular enjoys the opportunity to share his stories with those interested tourists. "Tourists have tour guide to talk with me. Tour guide know me and bring tourists to me to tell stories. I enjoy it very much to tell them my stories."

In Ban Raummit, the main cultural manifestation offered for tourists' consumption is an elephant trek. This activity combines a traditional cultural practice of the Karen with a feeling of adventure for tourists unaccustomed to riding on the back of an elephant. The Karen have used elephants to work in the forests and as a means of transportation for many years. One villager told me that "after WWII, the government told the Karen people to take food to Japan with their elephants . . . because only Karen people can control elephants." Various regular elephant treks are offered to tourists (see Table 3) These treks range from short 20 minute tours through the village of Raummit to treks lasting several hours. The longer treks follow routes through the mountains and forests, to a waterfall and to other villages of the Yao and Lahu tribes (Figure 9). In addition to the regular treks, other custom tours are often arranged.

Table 3. Elephant Treks offered in Ban Raummit. At the time of this study $1CDN = 26 Baht.

Raummit to Yao village: Huai Mai Sai	600 Baht/elephant (2 persons)
Raummit to Lahu village: Yafou	600 Baht/elephant (2 persons)
Raummit to Lahu village: Jathor	400 Baht/elephant (2 persons)
Raummit to Lahu village: Jator	500 Baht/elephant (2 persons)
Raummit village tour	100 Baht/elephant (2 persons)
Riding an elephant	400 Baht/hour (2 persons)

Local Environment

The local environment is a strong component of this tourist attraction, and for many people, it may be considered the strongest aspect of the attraction. One tourist stated that "the hill tribes are nice to see, but not the main reason I came. The scenery is so beautiful and I want to see more jungles."

Ban Raummit is located along the Mae Kok River in Chiang Rai province of northern Thailand. One tourist brochure offers the following description: "The Maenam Kok River is 130 kilometres long and runs through the heart of Chiang Rai. The river is well-known for

Figure 7. Photo of a foreigner trying her hand at harvesting rice with a Karen farmer outside of Ban Raummit.

its beautiful and unspoilt nature as it flows along jungle banks and towering mountain cliffs" (TAT, 1996). There is often a mist in the mountains that makes the area feel almost mystical. One tourist noted that "the scenery is fabulous. It is easy to see the attraction of taking this ride. The mountains seem to rise out of nowhere and their vegetation is lush." Along the journey from either Chiang Rai or Thaton, tourists will see teak and bamboo forests, rice paddy fields, hot springs and other tribal villages (see Figure 8).

Once in the village, the elephant rides and hiking treks take the tourists into these forests. Most routes will leave the village and travel through some of the villagers' agricultural fields before entering the forests. The sides of the mountains are terraced with rice paddy fields creating the classic scenery of northern Thailand. There are a number of other tribal villages and a waterfall within a few hours hike or elephant ride from Raummit. The peace and quiet of this journey are also appreciated by the traveller who has often just left the hectic and loud cities of Thailand. As one weary traveller noted: "I came here just to escape the hustle and bustle of Bangkok." Most of the travellers who come to Ban Raummit to experience either the culture of the Karen or the surrounding environment visit this location as one stop on a tour circuit.

Figure 8. Photo of the hills and forests along the Mae Kok River.

Tour Circuits

As an attraction, Ban Raummit does not exist on its own. It is a component of various tour circuits. This village is unique in that it is a part of both the jungle trek and the tribal village tour circuits. Ban Raummit's location along the Mae Kok River makes it a favourable place for jungle treks leaving either Chiang Mai or Chiang Rai to finish their long boat or raft rides and begin their journey into the forests. The location also makes Ban Raummit an accessible picture stop for the tribal village tours.

The original tourist role of this village was as a component of a tribal village tour, and trekkers were the original type of tourist. In the past, Ban Raummit was a main stop on their trek to learn about the tribal people. Because of the many changes and modernizations that have occurred recently in Ban Raummit, it is no longer considered one of the better villages to learn about the Karen. As the new name suggests, this village is now composed of a mixture people from various tribal groups.

As a component of a trekking circuit, this village is still frequented as a staging point for their journeys further into the hills. Groups will start either in Chiang Mai or Chiang Rai and take a long boat to this village (see Figure 9). Upon arrival they will arrange to have the elephants take them to one of the more traditional tribal villages higher on the hills: Jator, Jathor or Yafou. Elephant trekking has become an extremely popular component of many jungle tours. In addition, the elephant trek is a very traditional activity of the Karen and a popular expression of their culture. The ride also offers a sense of adventure as the trekkers venture off into the forests. This circuit encompasses all the most popular aspects of a hill tribe trek. Tourists can ride a long boat down the Mae Kok, trek on an elephant, hike through beautiful forests and hills, as well as visit four main tribal groups within the span of four days, and three nights.

Ban Raummit is also frequented by many sightseeing tours. The accessibility and modern conveniences of this village have made it a favourite of these operators. As a component of their northern Thailand itineraries, Ban Raummit is not the major destination but works in well as an intermediate stop on their visit to Chiang Rai and the Golden Triangle. Most of these tours start in Chiang Mai, the gateway city to northern Thailand.

The following itinerary was described by one of the sight-seeing operators from Chiang Mai whose tours frequent Ban Raummit:

> [After leaving Chiang Mai and travelling to Thaton], they go on to Chiang Rai by boat. Along the river they see the hill tribes: about 20 in total. May stop at four to five villages along the way. After Chiang Rai, they go on to the Golden Triangle and Mae Sai. Stop at interesting villages - not the small ones. They may have four to five families. Hill tribes stay by the water so it is easy to see them.

The long boat ride down the Mae Kok exposes the people to the amazing scenery of northern Thailand, while creating a sense of adventure for these mid-centric tourists. There are also a number of different tribal villages along the river that are easily accessible. With this itinerary, tour group participants feel that they are seeing the major attractions of the North.

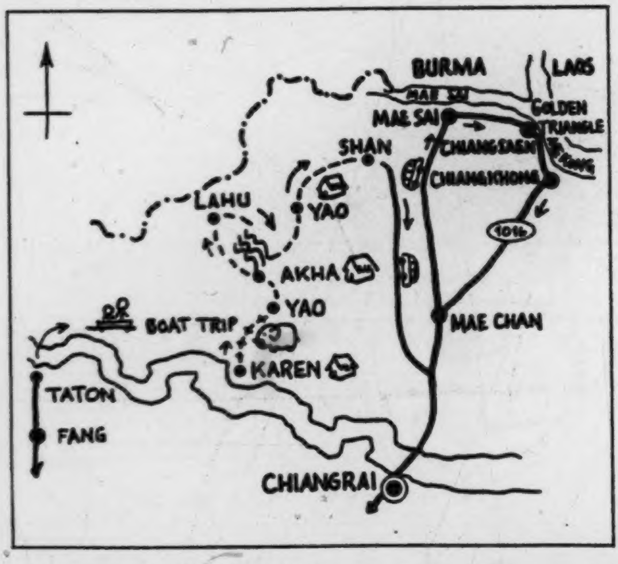


Figure 9. Sample map of a common trekking route featuring Ban Raummit as the staging point for treks into the jungle. The name of the village is not provided. Only the name of the main tribal group is featured (Guntamala and Puapratum, 1992, p. 34).

Even within the village, the activities of the different tourists vary greatly. Those with limited interest in the Karen people who may have simply stopped as part of their tour package typically spend their short village stay in one of the restaurants by the river enjoying the scenery and a soda. Others venture into the village and shop or take pictures of the various tribal shop keepers or Karen villagers. Some, who have ready access to the interpretive services of their guides, may take the time to find a Karen person with whom they can talk. Still others may take the elephant rides. These rides tend to be the shorter 20 or 30 minute village tours rather than the forest treks. Often their activities are dictated by the amount of time that they are scheduled to stay in the village. Upon leaving Ban Raummit these tours usually travel to Chiang Rai where the tour participants spend the night in a hotel.

Tourist Facilities

While the combination of an unique culture, mystical scenery, and quiet serenity is the reason tourists visit Ban Raummit, additional tourist facilities have been provided to promote their comfort. A total of seven restaurants have been built in Raummit; five tend to cater to the local people and two cater primarily to tourists. The two that cater to the tourists are located along the river; one beside the main boat dock and the other beside the elephant loading area. Both offer menus in English, and provide food more similar to western styles. Examples of menu items include Wall's Ice Cream, Pepsi and Coca Cola products, as well as fried rice and fruit. These two restaurants are much larger and more obvious than those that cater to the local people. Both of the tourist restaurants are operated by Thai people.

Souvenir shops have also become plentiful. This village now has 51 shops: five that cater primarily to local people and 46 that cater to the tourists. People from various ethnic groups operate these shops (see Table 4). The shops are located along the roads most often travelled by tourists. These roads include the main one connecting the village to Chiang Rai, and the two smaller roads leading to the boat docks. Although they comprise the majority of the village population, Karen people represent a small minority of the shop owners: eight tourist shops and three shops for the locals.

Table 4: Table outlining the ownership and target market of the shops in Ban Raummit

			Operator	Ethnicity				
Target Market	Karen	Thai	Hmong	Akha	Lisu	Yao	Swiss	Total
Tourist	11	4	17	10	2	1	1	46
Local	3	2	0	0	0	0	0	5

Most of the tourist shops sell crafts, souvenirs, and some have postcards. Few of these crafts are made in this village, or even by Karen. One Karen vendor noted that "my crafts come from Mae Sai or Lamphun. I do not go there because I have no transportation. People come here to sell the stuff. Sometimes they may come 2-3 times each month, other times only once." As a result, most of the crafts are fairly generic, and they can be found in many other places. Some of the Hmong and Akha vendors who sell in this village will pack up in the evening to take their souvenirs to sell in the Chiang Rai Night Bazaar. There are a few exceptions to this practice. The Karen weavers who work by the river making belts, bracelets, and bags sometimes sell their wares in the local shops.

Infrastructure

Another important feature of a destination is the infrastructure. The level of infrastructure development in a destination is indicative of its stage in Butler's tourism cycle of evolution (1980). Ban Raummit's current infrastructure reflects its entry into the consolidation stage.

The most obvious tourist structures are the elephant loading area and the boat docks. There are two boat docks in Raummit. The main one is located beside the elephant loading area. It is simply a flat area of beach on which the long boats can land for the passengers to unload (Figure 10). As the boats approach the village from either Thaton or Chiang Rai, people can see the elephants at the same time as the village comes into view, and they often get quite excited. This location makes it convenient for unloading the boats and loading the elephants. There is little opportunity for people to get lost. The elephant loading area is a wooden structure. Tourists walk up the stairs to a platform where they wait for the elephants. The mahouts (elephant controllers) bring the elephants close enough for people to simply step off the structure onto the head of the elephant and sit in the saddle (see Figure 11). The second boat dock is smaller and located around the bend of the river closer to Chiang Rai. The elephants are not visible from this spot, and it is often those tours which do not feature elephant rides that dock here.

Other examples of basic structures built specifically to increase the comfort of the tourists during their visit include three sets of public toilets, or "squatters" to be more precise. One is located behind each of the two tourist restaurants, and a third is located by the road leading to the main boat dock. These are easily accessible to the tourists and relatively clean according to western standards. Normally, tourists are charged two baht to use them.

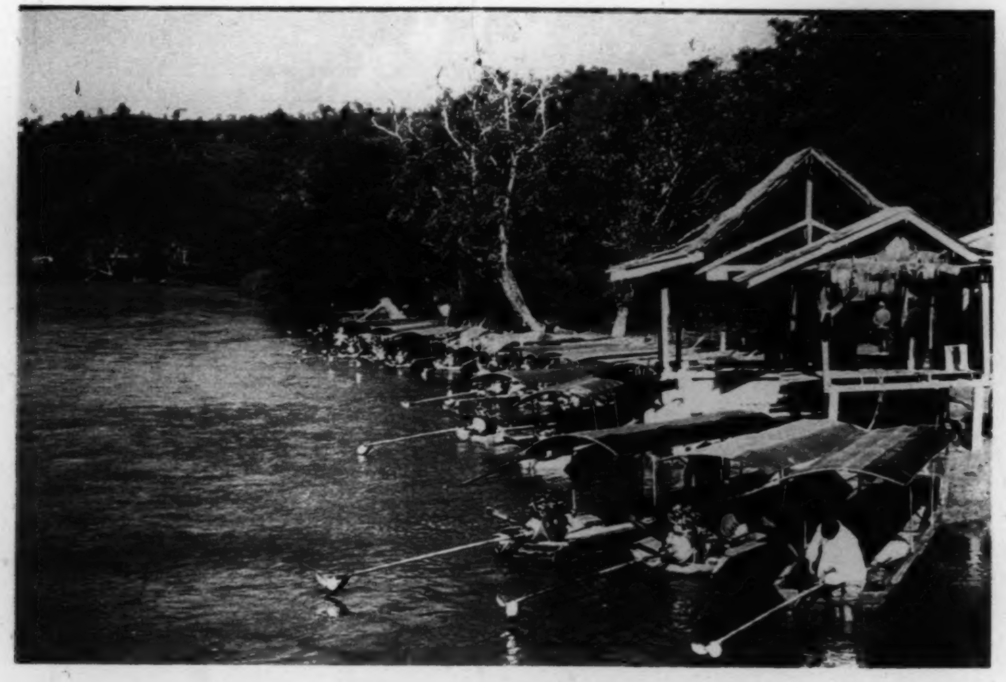


Figure 10. Photo of the boat landing area of Ban Raummit

Additional physical changes have occurred simultaneously with this increase in tourism infrastructure. As a result of the changing lifestyle of the Karen, and partly due to the increased income provided by tourism, many modernizations have been introduced to the village. The housing style of some villagers has changed. Traditionally, most houses were built with bamboo and thatch because it was readily available and easy to dismantle when people moved. Now that the Karen have become more sedentary, they require sturdier homes. The additional tourism income provides the means by which many villagers purchase cement and tin to complete their home improvement (see Figure 12). Electricity and telephones were also introduced into the village in 1996.

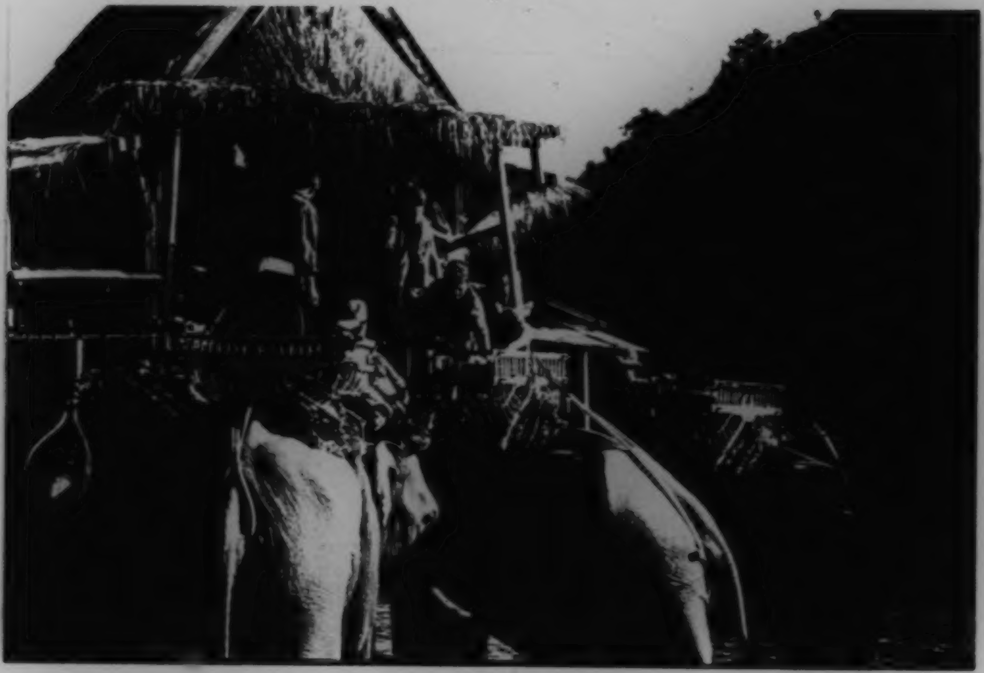


Figure 11. Photo of the elephant loading area of Ban Raummit

Hospitality Resources

Tourists in Ban Raummit tend to receive a general feeling of welcome from villagers. Most of the villagers appear to enjoy having tourists. In addition to liking most of the tourists, they acknowledge the important role that tourists have in generating income for the village. This acknowledgement is demonstrated by the following statement from one of the villagers: "everybody wants to have tourists because they can make money." The impact that the tourists have on the daily lives of the villagers is at an acceptable level. In response, the villagers treat the tourists well. Yet, they admit that not all of the tourists are the same. "Foreigners are not the same from different countries. Some are very bad tourists." Certain tourists seem to annoy the Karen people more than others with their ethnocentric attitudes.

The people directly involved in the provision of tourism services are also trained in

Figure 12. Photo of a modern Karen home in Ban Raummit.

customer service. The services expectations of Europeans and North Americans are different than those of Asians. Because tourism is an important industry throughout northern Thailand, the Chiang Rai TAT offers customer service training seminars to the mahouts, shop keepers and boat drivers. The Tourist Police chief in Ban Raummit noted that the villagers of Ban Raummit often attend one seminar per year at the Mae Kok Farm across the river from this village. Though there is little verbal communication between the Karen people and the tourists, these seminars improve other interactions between the groups.

Evolution of Ban Raummit as a Tourism Destination

Tourism began in this village about 22 years ago. It was introduced by a missionary who had spent some time in Japan where he learned about trekking. Upon his return to Thailand, he came to this village and suggested that they begin to offer elephant treks. At that time, the village had three elephants that they used to work in the forest.

In the past the elephants were used for labour in the forest. They had only

> three elephants to start with. There were no roads so they used the elephants for transportation to the fields. The fields were far from home . . . After that, villagers used them for trekking. They took the trekkers to the Lahu and Yao villages. When they did this there were only 5-6 people at a time (not Thai people, just foreigners). They used to spend the night.

During this exploration stage (Butler, 1980), there were no specific tourist facilities or infrastructure. Most trekkers stayed and ate in the homes of the Karen people. Their visits were irregular so none of the elephants needed to be solely dedicated to transporting tourists. Because the trekking groups were small and they stayed with the tribal people, interactions between the two groups were fairly intimate. Yet, only "seven to eight of the villagers were involved with the trekkers," so the impacts of trekking were not wide spread. The building of tourist facilities remained minimal for the first five to ten years. One operator noted "I was one of the first tour companies here - more than 12 years. When I first came, there was no guest house, there were no toilets . . . Well there were toilets, but not up to European standards."

In Ban Raummit, the stage of evolution that Butler (1980) has labelled "involvement" began around 1985. As more people visited the village, the Karen people realized that the tourists wanted to learn about their way of life. They also became aware that these tourists were a source of income.

> Before we only had older tourist about 40-50 years old. They liked to experience the culture. Some were even 60-70 years old and very fat. They could only put one on each elephant. When they stayed over night the Karen did show performances at night. Tourists could talk to the Karen and eat their food.

The tourists that came to Raummit at this time tended to fit Plog's (1991) classification of the allocentric and near allocentric tourists. They came seeking to experience the Karen culture. Most were willing to forego their regular comforts in exchange for the opportunity to have a novel experience. At this time the tourists were as interesting and different to the Karen as the Karen were to the tourists. As the Karen people consider all people to be their brothers and sisters, this stage of cultural sharing was quite enjoyable for them. They enjoyed demonstrating parts of their culture to others.

The early stages of development displayed a moderate rate of growth as tourist facilities began to emerge. For example, the first tourist oriented restaurant opened around 1985 along the river. The next tourist operation, a souvenir shop about 20m from the restaurant, opened shortly afterwards. Both of these establishments were operated by Thai people who had moved to Ban Raummit to serve the tourists. Two more Thai owned restaurants opened along the river to cater to the trekkers by 1988. These developments were made in response to a rising number of tourists in the area. The next five years saw more shops open so that there were a total of ten tourist shops and three local shops in the village by 1993. At this point, only one of the shops was run by a Karen person. For many years, the village had not allowed other groups to open tourist shops, but the Karen were apparently not interested in pursuing the opportunities themselves either.

A change occurred in the village around 1993 that quickly launched the village into the evolutionary stage that Butler (1980) referred to as the consolidation stage. The village agreed to let more outside people open shops for the tourists. This shift brought about drastic changes to the physical appearance of the village. Today there are a total of 51 shops in Ban Raummit. The majority of these shops are operated by people with ethnic backgrounds other than Karen (see Table 3). These non-Karen groups now dominate the tourist landscape because their shops line the three main roads used by visitors.

Another area of simultaneous growth has been the number of elephants. The villagers now own 32 elephants. Because of the limited disposable income of most Karen persons, one elephant is often owned by a group of people who pool their resources to purchase the animal. "Elephants cost about 150,000 Baht. This is very expensive here. That means that many people put their money together to buy the elephants. Ten people may save to buy one elephant." Each elephant will also have its own mahout.

The rapid growth of the tourism industry in Ban Raummit during these late development and consolidation stages parallels the substantial growth of tourism in Thailand. In 1985 there were 2,438,270 visitors to Thailand with an average visitor stay of 5.58 days.

By 1993, this had risen to 5,760,533 visitors with an average stay of 6.94 days (Cohen, 1996). Thus, there were more people visiting more places in Thailand. During this time, the north of Thailand became a major destination, and in 1995, 2.6 million visitors reached Chiang Mai (TAT, 1996). As the number of tourists visiting northern Thailand increased, so did the number of tourists visiting tribal villages, especially the more accessible ones.

Ban Raummit is located along the Mae Kok River between Thaton and Chiang Rai. Because this water route is used for regular transportation, boat access to this village is relatively easy. Long boats provide regular and charter transportation to this village from both Chiang Rai and Thaton, as well as certain resorts located along the Mae Kok. Vehicle access was also greatly improved when a portion of the road from Chiang Rai to Ban Raummit was paved about four years ago. Although the pavement did not reach the village, the remaining portion was widened to make vehicle transportation much easier. Prior to these improvements, the trail to Chiang Rai was only suitable for walking or motorcycles. Today a trip from Raummit to Chiang Rai by car takes approximately 40 minutes. Improved accessibility is one of the main reasons that the larger tour groups from Bangkok and Chiang Mai began to regularily include Ban Raummit on their northern Thailand tour itineraries.

This inclusion has meant a different type of tourist with different demands visiting Raummit. People touring with these larger groups tend to fit Plog's (1979) description of the more mid-centric tourists. They are comfortable visiting this destination now that the tourist facilities and infrastructure have been improved. In addition, the village has become a more well known destination. While the original trekkers spent time in the village interacting with the Karen people in their everyday surroundings, typically the new tourists prefer less exotic experiences. The two basic types of tourists are relatively easy to distinguish. "If the people have backpacks they are trekkers. But if they have only a camera and only a small purse they are sightseers. There are more of these tourists. They don't want to take the elephant rides." Although the division is not quite this straight forward, the two main types of tourists remain trekkers and sightseers, and the evolution tends to be leading to fewer trekkers and more sightseers.

Role of Tourism in Ban Raummit

The tourism industry has important roles in the community of Ban Raummit. Firstly, it provides supplementary income to many villagers allowing them to access certain benefits of modern Thai life. In addition, the income generated from tourism acts as an enabling force in the village by providing the money required for various community development projects.

The Karen people are becoming further integrated into Thai society on a variety of fronts. Increasingly, they are exposed to Thai ways through their involvement in Thailand's educational and political systems. Yet, as they attempt to participate in these social systems, they face a variety of barriers. Typically, they have limited access to education and jobs, and negligible control over the political processes and decisions that influence their lives. One Karen person communicated his sense of lack of control over the many decisions that impact their lives:

> Today many of the villagers do not have documents for the land - only the investors do. They [the villagers] do not own the land, but they use it. The villagers want to have the documents for the land, but when they ask the Royal Forestry Department they cannot. They will not sign because this is a conservation forest. But, if the person has money, they will get the documents. If a person wants to have the documents to the land they will pay 30,000 Baht. . . . Many of the government officers get rich because this money does not go to the government. It is like a service fee for them to process everything so it will work! There are many things that you have to do to get the documents so you pay them.

The Karen are being integrated into a system which they are just beginning to understand. Processes such as requiring documents for land rights were not a concern with which they dealt in the past. Though they have lived and farmed in this area for many years, most have been told that they cannot own it because it is part of a conservation forest. The above statement illustrates their frustration when Thai people with money are later allowed to purchase the same land.

Their confusion is intensified by the seemingly lack of universality with which many other policies are applied as well. Laws that apply to the villagers seem not to apply to certain representatives of the government that made them.

> The villagers in this village do not want people to cut the bamboo shoots. They are not allowed to do it, so they do not want others to do it either. Some people though, pay the policeman in Mayao District to let them cut the trees here. When the villagers catch the people doing this they complain to the police. The officer told them that if they do not want him to cut the bamboo, he will sell their elephants. People paid the police to let them cut the trees. The people in this village cannot afford to have their elephants sold so they can do nothing.

While Karen lives are regulated by laws governing the protection and uses of the conservation forest, certain other individuals are using these same forests for their personal economic benefit. When the villagers attempt to rectify the situation, they are reminded of their limited access to the power structure of this society. The Karen people with Thai citizenship officially have the same rights as any Thai citizen, but the hierarchy of Thai society places them on a lower level of power.

There is one common element in both of these accounts that the Karen feel could grant them a greater degree of access to the benefits of Thai society, and that element is money. Traditionally, the Karen are subsistence agriculturalists and have little use for cash incomes, but as they have integrated further into Thai society, their need for money has increased.

Many tribal people who want to gain access to the benefits of Thai society are forced to leave their traditional villages and cultures to pursue a different way of life. Within their villages, options for earning a cash income are limited. One villager described his cash income as follows: "I make money by selling things in the store. Sometimes I sell my pigs." While some Karen people want to access the material benefits of Thai society, many, such as the following young woman, indicate that they do not want to abandon their homes to achieve this goal.

> If I can choose, I will marry a Thai person. I want to live here though. A Thai

man will make more money because he will work in Chiang Rai. If I marry a Karen, he will do agriculture and not have many money.

The tourism in Ban Raummit provides the Karen people with an attractive option. They can earn a cash income while remaining in their village with their families.

Supplementary Income

Within Ban Raummit there are various ways with which the Karen earn money from the tourists. The most obvious method is through the elephant tours. One villager estimated that a total of about 300 people own some portion of an elephant. At the end of each month the profits from the elephants treks are divided between the owners. The mahouts also earn an income from tourism. They receive both a monthly wage from the elephant owners and tips from the tourists. There are eight Karen people who own souvenir shops, and two women operate weaving booths along the water. A limited number of Karen land owners rent their land to vendors for their shops. A less popular source of income is begging. This method is practised mostly by children. The revenue generated by any of these methods is difficult to determine. Villagers were not willing to share the amount of tourism revenue they earned because they were anxious about this information being given to the government for taxation, but some estimates were provided by various individuals:

- "I earn from 1000 - 1500 baht in a busy month."
- "I pay the elephant controllers 1000 baht per month."
- "I make a little bit from tourism - about 200 baht per week."

Regardless of the type of revenue source or the amount, few of the Karen villagers who generate income through their participation with the tourism industry consider it their main source for survival. For most it is a supplementary source:

- "I built the store with my husband. Now he still works in the field as a farmer."
- "Mostly I make rice on the farm. Now only this, but before corn too. I make corn at the same time as rice, but corn is finished. I grow it to eat and sell: rice and corn. . . . Farm about the same with or without tourism"

Even the mahouts who invest significant amounts of time into tourism acknowledge that tourism will not be their main source of income throughout their lifetime:

> Old people cannot control elephants. If they control one day, they are sore with back aches the next few. Usually they stop controlling around 36 years old. . . . Then he will go work on the farm. All the controllers have farm land.

Tourism as an Enabler

While the tourism income is not, for most individuals, their main source of income, it acts as an enabling force in their attempts to access the benefits of modern life. One villager noted that the money is used to purchase "luxury" goods: "It is better than the old times because now we have some luxuries." The luxuries include items such as motorcycles, rice cookers, electric clocks, stereos and televisions. Interestingly, the involvement of the Karen people as shopkeepers increased significantly the year after electricity was introduced to the village. The introduction of electricity seemed to create a new set of wants in the villagers. Their increased involvement in the shops may indicate an increased need for extra cash income to purchase the electrical appliances that they can now use.

Money generated from tourism, especially the elephants, is also used to benefit the village community and has become an essential element in community development. "The elephant owners have re-invested into the fence around the school, improving the loading area and improving the road from Chiang Rai. Each year it is destroyed from the rain and we re-build it." The tourism income grants the Karen a degree of control over village development that most other tribal villages do not have. Most other villages must apply for government funding to complete development projects. The headman of Ban Raummit stated "if we want to do a project in this village, it is usually no problem because if the government does not want to pay for it, there is money from the tourism to pay for the programs." Thus, tourism is one of the few tools that the Karen people have to access either the material benefits of Thai society or to exercise control over village development. This growing dependence on tourism makes it important to ensure the sustainability of the tourism industry.

Tourism's roles in the community of Ban Raummit are important. Yet, this village has progressed from the exploratory stage of Butler's cycle of evolution to the consolidation stage in a matter of 22 years. This rapid rate of progression raises some concerns about the sustainability of the trekking industry in this village. If tourism is to remain a viable economic option for the people of Ban Raummit, the challenges facing this industry, as well as potential strategies to address these challenges need to be identified and adopted.

CHAPTER SIX

ADDRESSING SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

The question is often asked whether tourism development is positive or negative for a destination region. Though the question has academic and theoretical worth, in a village such as Ban Raummit, this question means little to the people who live there. To them tourism simply, "is." Good or bad, the villagers have accepted it as a part of their daily lives. One villager stated that:

> We don't like tourists to come and change the culture, but they have. Missionaries came to the village and told us that tourists would be good here. They taught that if we have tourists, we will have money. Now the villagers can't change.

The villagers have come to not only accept tourism, but to rely on it. In this village tourism is seen as an enabling force. The extra income it provides enables the Karen to access certain benefits of modern Thai society to which they were previously denied access. As a result, the more appropriate question is "what are some of the challenges that these people face with regard to tourism here and how can they be addressed?"

By answering the above question, this chapter will fulfill the second and third objectives of this thesis. The challenges to a sustainable tourism industry in Ban Raummit will be identified. This discussion will be followed by the recommendation of potential strategies with which to address these challenges.

Challenges to Sustainable Tourism

Ban Raummit, as an ethnic tourism attraction in northern Thailand, has been progressing through Butler's tourism cycle of evolution (1980) at a rapid pace. As predicted in Dearden's adaptation of this cycle (see Figure 1), certain challenges to the sustainability of this destination have evolved. The first is the tourists' perception of a loss in authenticity, and a second, albeit related, challenge is a continual change in the type of tourist visiting this destination. Another challenge to sustainability of tourism in Ban Raummit that was not predicted in the literature, but became evident in this research, relates to the shifting ethnic balance and commitment to the community. Each of these will be discussed in this section.

Perceived Authenticity

One of the key challenges facing Ban Raummit is to manage the tourists' perception of the authenticity of this destination as a centre for Karen culture. The attraction nucleus of this village has been identified primarily in terms of the Karen culture found there. As an ethnic tourism destination, tourists visit this village expecting to experience some aspect of the Karen ethnicity. They are searching for an opportunity to see the "other" in their primitive state. As this village has modernized, and its tourism system has become more institutionalized, there has been a corresponding decrease in the level of interaction between the Karen and the tourists. As a result, this village may not be fulfilling the visitors' expectations of a primitive hill tribe community.

Many tourists no longer tend to perceive Ban Raummit to be an authentic tribal village. One man offered the following comment: "Raummit is like a business. One or two shops are OK. But this is too much. It is not real life." Cohen (1988) argues that "authenticity is a socially constructed concept and its social . . . connotation is, therefore not given, but negotiable" (p. 374). The perceptions that tourists form of an attraction depend on their knowledge and expectations of that attraction. This particular tourist had expected a more primitive village where tribal people continue to practice their traditional lifestyle. For this reason, he perceived Ban Raummit to be an inauthentic tribal village, when in fact, it is a "real" village. This perception was also partly in response to the portion of the village to which he was exposed. This portion was a front stage that has emerged for tourist consumption.

Front Stage

Another challenge facing the sustainability of tourism in this village is to reduce the negative impact that the unplanned non-Karen front stage has on the exposure of the tourists to the Karen people of Ban Raummit. The layout of this village is a major inhibitor of interactions between the tourists and the Karen people. The 51 shops that line the main village roads have created a very effective front stage that defines the bulk of the tourist space (see Figure 13). These shops are built side by side, thereby blocking out the view of the majority of the village. As a result, tourists' movements are directed by the location of these shops, and they tend to feel uncomfortable venturing off these main tourist streets. Occasionally tourists would venture onto two other small sections of road that have been cemented. One of these roads leads past a few Karen homes, while the other leads to the children's school residence. Observations suggest that tourists would walk up these roads until the cement stopped at which point they would immediately turn around and head back to the main road. Thus, few tourists penetrated the back stage to catch even a glimpse of the Karen in their daily routines. One villager commented that "people never go to my house because it is behind the school."

Dogan (1989) suggests that the creation of a front stage is one response that communities may have to tourism. A boundary may be created to separate tourist areas from local areas. This type of front stage is developed to shield the community from the invasion of tourists into areas where they are not welcome, and results in the maintenance of a more positive attitude toward tourists. The front stage in Ban Raummit has not evolved for this purpose. Rather, it has been unplanned, and it has had the opposite effect on the attitude of the villagers. This front stage is dominated by ethnic groups other than Karen. As a result, the tribal people to whom the tourists are exposed, reflect very little of the Karen culture. This problem is illustrated in the following account communicated by a European lady living in the village:

> A couple of tourists had stopped to talk to me. They were going through the regular questions. They asked how I like being married to an Akha husband. I replied that I do not have an Akha husband; he is Karen. This is a Karen village that you are in. The people were a little upset with the guide because she had told them that this was an Akha village. The guide was very embarrassed because she did not know. I felt bad too. The guide was from Bangkok and had never been here before. It was a fair mistake because all of the people that are selling along the main street are Akha, not Karen. Those

> are their costumes that the guide would have seen. The only Karen sellers are on the street from the school dock. They wear their traditional dress so that the tourists can recognize them.

For these non-Karen shopkeepers, tourism is their main business, and the primary reason that they are in Ban Raummit. As a result, they focus on attracting tourists to their shops by conscientiously wearing their traditional costumes which are the major identifying features of various tribal groups.

Figure 13. Photo of tourists walking through the tourist space of Ban Raummit.

In contrast, fewer of the Karen people wear their traditional dress while tourists are in the village. The majority of villagers spend their days working in the fields while the tourists are visiting. They argue that "western clothes like T-shirts are much easier to wash." In the evenings, when all the tourists are gone however, many of the Karen wear their traditional dress at home. The irony of this situation is that the Karen people in their jeans and T-shirts are actually more "authentic" than the non-Karen shopkeepers who wear their traditional dress mainly to attract tourists. Yet, most tourists have the opposite perception of the situation.

The Karen do not consider their clothing to be an element of the tourism attraction. When asked how tourists identify Ban Raummit as a Karen village, one of the villagers replied that:

> People will know because the sign says that this is a Karen village. Tourists will know who Karen people are from their dress. But, now not have many people want to wear the Karen dress. The guide will tell them so they will know.

Though the Karen are aware that their culture is the attraction for the tourists, few of them understand that because of this fact, tourists expect them to "display" their culture. One of the main features that tourists want to see in a hill tribe village is the tribal people's colourful dress. When they instead see the Karen people wearing jeans and T-shirts, the tourists doubt the authenticity of the attraction.

The barrier created by the physical layout is not as severe for all tourists. The Karen people actually enjoy talking to the tourists and welcome the opportunities for genuine interactions. Yet, they will not search for the interactions. They feel that it is the responsibility of the tourist to seek them out. An older villager stated that "when tourist walk around, guide will bring them here because many of them know me." Those tourists who come in small groups and have a guide that frequents the village are more likely to penetrate the back stage and experience the Karen welcome. Occasionally, groups of two to five people with their guide would walk into the school yard. As the village evolves, these small groups are found less frequently.

Evolution of Tourist Types

Addressing the needs of the changing types of tourists visiting Ban Raummit is another challenge facing the villagers. As the attraction system of Ban Raummit has matured with an increasing level of infrastructure and a decreasing level of perceived authenticity, the types of tourists who visit have also changed. Different types of tourists have different expectations of the level of authenticity and the level of infrastructure development that should exist at a destination.

Originally, Ban Raummit catered only to trekkers. These tourists fit Plog's (1979) description of allocentric tourists. They preferred to visit tribal villages in their primitive state, prior to the development of any tourist infrastructure. Many of these tourists would also comply with Cohen's (1979a) description of experiential tourists who travel in search of a potentially better way of life. Though the attraction system of this village has changed, it continues to be a component of many trekking itineraries. Its location along the banks of the Mae Kok River makes it a convenient staging point for their journey into the hills to visit more remote and primitive villages. For many of these trekkers, Ban Raummit no longer satisfies their search for a primitive "other", and acts only as a staging point of their journey.

As the tourist infrastructure of this village has developed, and more tourists travel to northern Thailand, an increasing number of sightseeing groups have come to Ban Raummit. These groups tend to fit Plog's (1979) classification of mid-centric tourists. They find the increasingly modern and familiar facilities of Ban Raummit acceptable to their standards. As a result, tour operators who target mid-centric tourists bring them to this village for an introduction to the hill tribes of northern Thailand and an elephant ride. In Ban Raummit, "the big companies came about five years ago. Big groups are sightseeing not trekking. They started to come because Chiang Mai, these places not have many elephants and big groups needed lots of elephants." These groups often stay in the village for a very limited amount of time (20 minutes to two hours). In addition, one guide will bring 20 - 30 tourists and thus, it is not feasible for the guide to accompany all of his/her clients on their walks. These tourists have a more superficial attitude toward the authenticity of an attraction, and they do not expect intimate interactions with a primitive people. These changing expectations are illustrated by the following comments from tourism operators:

- "Tourists just want to like about the day. The guide will explain, but they just want to enjoy."
- "Other groups like the Israelis don't want to know anything. They just want to ride for fun."

These "lower" expectations are easier for Ban Raummit to fulfill, but like the trekkers, these tourists often leave the village with little or no interaction with, or exposure to, the Karen because of the barrier created by the unplanned front stage. As a result, many tourists, both trekkers and sightseers, are leaving Ban Raummit dissatisfied with their experience. This is evident from tourist comments such as:

- "This is not real Karen. This is like a town."
- "You have to go out of your way to get out of the way of the tourists."
- "One or two shops are OK, but this is too much. This is not real life."

Operators listen to these comments and are aware of their clients satisfaction levels with various destinations. If certain destinations are no longer providing the experiences promised to their clients, operators will stop using these villages, and search for more authentic villages:

- "Normally they ride elephants in Chang Dao now. It is more interesting than Raummit. Raummit has changed a lot ... Now it is similar to the city."
- "If China and Burma open up to tourism, Thailand will no longer have it."

Shifting Ethnic Balance and Commitment to Community

In addition to the above listed challenges that were predicted in the literature, another challenge emerged during interviews with the villagers. The Karen people feel that the presence of the non-Karen shopkeepers has eroded their control over the development of their village. As a result, resentment toward these other ethnic groups has begun to grow. The newcomers appear to be gaining significant benefits from the tourists while the Karen people are forced to deal with many of the costs. One older villager voiced his concern that some of these vendors tend to have a short term outlook on their actions in the village while the

Karen must consider their long term future here:

> First time have one or two families. I never mind cause there was little. They have shop, so nothing. Now there are many, many. The Lisu and Hmong, they cut the trees everywhere. When I tell them "Don't do" they don't listen. Some people who buy the land to stay here are good. But, those who rent the land are not so good. People who own the land is good because the land is own and will do good things. People who rent the land do things everywhere, but do things that are not good.

The resentment of certain Karen villagers has magnified because some of the non-Karen vendors have refused to contribute to community projects in the village from which all villagers would derive significant benefits:

> The group with the shop they work, work and make money from the village. This year the villagers had a conference with the headman. They want to change, to have the shops pay 300 Baht. Somebody they agree with this to pay the 300 Baht to the village to help this village to have something good and somebody don't want to pay, only 100 - 150 Baht per year. Now some shops think that they don't have many money from tourists. They don't think that they should pay because they don't make money. I think that if they didn't make money they would not be here. They want to have rewards from the village, but not pay money to help. It will be used for development of road, for the village, not for the elephants.

The development of better roads and services in the village would benefit everyone including the non-Karen vendors, yet they do not want to pay. The vendors reportedly feel that the rent that they pay to the land owners is an adequate fee.

The existence of these other groups in the village has changed village dynamics as well. According to certain Karen villagers, more fights, both physical and verbal, break out among villagers. Traditionally, the Karen are peaceful while other groups tend to fight more. "Akha don't like to talk to each other. They have boxing." The headman is forced to deal with these new problems, and in certain instances, the role of the tourist police has increased within the village as reflected in the following comment: "If the headman comes and he cannot fix the problem, he takes them to the police station."

The resentment that the Karen people feel toward the other ethnic groups is symptomatic of their anger over the general lack of control that they face with regards to their village life. Many of the decisions that impact their lives originate outside of their village. In the past, tourism has been one tool with which they could direct their own development. Having the other ethnic groups present has reduced their ability to achieve this outcome.

Potential Strategies

The above challenges pose real threats to the sustainability of tourism in Ban Raummit. Without the implementation of strategies to address these challenges, Ban Raummit as a tourism destination will enter the decline stage of Butler's cycle (1980) and cease to benefit the villagers. This section will address the third objective of this thesis by recommending various strategies for a sustainable ethnic tourism industry in Ban Raummit. Hall (1995) suggests that the purpose of sustainable tourism development should be

> to extend, where appropriate, given certain economic, social and environmental objectives, the life span of a destination and/or tourism product and keep options open by careful maintenance of the resources base for future use which, of course, may not include tourism. (p. 103)

Many of the situational factors that have been discussed throughout this thesis have demonstrated the appropriateness of ethnic tourism as a viable development option for Ban Raummit. Admittedly, there are challenges involved in the tourism development in this village, but its benefits also appear to be substantial. Strategies to promote the sustainability of an ethnic tourism industry in Ban Raummit are therefore required.

Status Quo

The first, and often most common, strategy of many communities facing similar challenges to Ban Raummit is maintaining the status quo. This strategy is often followed by default as a conscious decision on a more pro-active strategy is often difficult to achieve.

Under the status quo, development would be allowed to continue without major interventions to direct it. The likely result of this strategy would be the premature decline of the tourism industry here. The perceived authenticity of this destination would continue to decline as it modernized and these changes were left unexplained to the tourists. The unplanned front stage of non-Karen shopkeepers would likely continue to grow for a period as more non-Karen shopkeepers moved into Ban Raummit. This growth would make interactions between the tourists and the Karen increasingly difficult, and unsatisfied tourists would result. As more tourists entered the village and left unsatisfied with their experiences, operators would receive negative feed back from them and remove this village from their itineraries. Eventually, few tourists would visit, and Ban Raummit would be left without this income source. At this point, the non-Karen shopkeepers would probably move to the next growth area for tourism. As a result, the ethnic balance would shift back to favour the Karen. This shift would tend to decrease tensions between the ethnic groups, but more Karen may also be forced to search for economic options outside of Ban Raummit.

Target the Mid-Centric Tourists

Currently there are two main types of tourists visiting Ban Raummit, trekkers and sightseers, and neither group is being satisfied. As this village has modernized, the essence of its attraction has changed. It is no longer a primitive and remote village. Many of the residents have some type of motorized vehicle. Most also have access to clean running water and electricity. The access to the main regional centres has been improved and many people, including the village school teachers commute to work from Chiang Rai. Thus, Ban Raummit's attraction to those trekkers looking for a "primitive other" is gone. At the same time, no villagers have indicated that they would want to "act the native" to attract these trekkers back. The modernizations now available here are appreciated by the locals.

One strategy available to the villagers then, is to focus on the new type of tourists now visiting Raummit. These tourists fit Plog's (1979) description of the mid-centric tourists who travel in the larger sightseeing groups. For this type of tourist, the search for primitive authenticity is not a critical motivator. They prefer to have certain modern comforts available in the destinations they visit. They come to Ban Raummit to see the tribal people, but not necessarily to interact with them during their daily lives. These tourists present an opportunity for the Karen to take control of the attractions and to provide services that cater directly to them. Improved services may include a more easily accessible boat docking area and regular cultural performances. The decisions about what services are to be improved may be determined through consultation with sightseeing operators. This process may improve relationships between the operators and the locals which would likely increase the loyalty of these operators to continue visiting Ban Raummit.

As the mid-centric group comprises the largest segment of tourists, this option has the potential to provide for an increased income for the villagers over an extended period of time. To achieve this goal, a certain amount of capital and human investment would be required to improve the services, but the increased income and prolonged visitation would justify this investment. Managing the perceived authenticity of this attraction would become easier as this group of tourists has different expectations. Though a degree of staged authenticity would permeate most performances, the mid-centric tourists tend to accept this change in authenticity as a tradeoff for improved services. In addition, this sort of exposure to the "other" requires less effort on behalf of the tourists. Without controls, the unplanned front stage would likely continue to grow because the number of tourists would increase. As this growth occurred, unplanned interactions between the Karen and tourists would continue to decrease. In addition, this strategy would do little to address the growing tensions resulting from the shifting ethnic balance and commitment to community. This tension may, in fact, increase as more non-Karen shopkeepers move to the village and continue to benefit from the increasing number of tourists.

Restructuring of the Physical Layout

With the development of a planned tourist space focussing on the ethnicity of the Karen, this village could be rejuvenated as an ethnic tourism destination which "directly involves native peoples whose ethnicity is a tourist attraction" (Smith, 1996). In the past, the money generated by the tourists has acted as an enabling force allowing villagers to control the development of their village. With some important decisions on behalf of the village committee, it could do so again. Changing the physical layout of the village to highlight chosen cultural elements could facilitate interactions between tourists and villagers. A planned tourist space where visitors can buy souvenirs, but also learn about the Karen culture would benefit this village.

Plans for a staged cultural village are currently being considered by this village. The headman made the statement that:

> We are working on a project now to build a place in this village to show people about Karen lifestyle. They will be able to go to the farm and show about agriculture. This will be not only for Karen though. They want to show all tribes. The more they conserve, the more tourists.

Building this new area will require capital. If the villagers are able to provide this capital themselves, it will give them a greater degree of control over the process. For this project to be successful as an ethnic tourism attraction, the Karen need to be the group guiding the process. This staged village could provide opportunities for older people who cannot work in the fields to share stories of the Karen history. It would also provide an opportunity for some young people to stay in the village and earn an income.

In addition to this development, a restructuring of the current front stage is also required. The resentment that has emerged between the Karen and non-Karen villagers is partly due to the lack of controls. People from outside this village have come to Raummit and earned an income while the greater village has received little of this benefit. The shops comprise an important aspect of the tourist infrastructure and therefore have a significant role to play. Thus, the decision makers in the village need to create a system whereby these groups give back to the village in some way. For example, a specific area within the created tourist village could be developed with these different groups to highlight their own tribal heritages. Within this space, they could rent spaces to sell their wares. These rental fees could be used in community development projects. The actual choices of the restructuring need to be made by the Karen people in conjunction with the other tribal groups.

This strategy tends to be the most comprehensive. The cultural village would be a form of staged authenticity, but would create an interesting opportunity for tourists to experience a living culture as well. Tourists who visit this village could learn about the traditional culture and life-ways of the Karen through the cultural village. In addition, interpretive programs that include components of the actual village could also educate the visitors about the Karen's present situation. These programs would provide a unique opportunity for tourists to see the evolution of a living culture as it works to integrate with modern Thai society.

The creation of this cultural village would add an attraction of value both to the trekkers and the sightseers. For the trekking groups, this cultural village could be an important stop in preparing them for their future interactions with more primitive groups. It could provide an educational component teaching the trekkers about appropriate and inappropriate actions within the different tribal villages. For the sightseeing tourists it would also play an important educational role. For these mid-centric groups, this planned tourist space would tend to facilitate interactions between tourists and villagers. Since the interactions would occur in a designated site, the tourists would not feel like they were intruding on the personal lives of the tribal people.

This strategy would also address the shifting ethnic balance by forcing the different ethnic groups to work together and address the issues. The other groups may not appreciate the changes immediately, but without the changes, a decline in tourists will likely continue. For the shopkeepers from other ethnic groups, this may not be important because their shops can be re-located to the next tourist area. The Karen people, on the other hand, need to build a more sustainable industry here because their options elsewhere in Thailand are limited.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

Indigenous communities such as those of the Karen face numerous challenges in modern society. Their traditional ways of life are continually questioned as they become increasingly integrated into dominant cultures. These communities are pressured to adapt to new social and economic systems. As tribal people are exposed to the benefits of modern society, new sets of wants and needs develop. In many cases, their traditional economic systems consisting of subsistence agriculture, hunting, and gathering are no longer appropriate for the modern economic systems in which they must participate. As a result, many of these communities find themselves searching for viable options for survival. The Karen people of Ban Raummit have accepted a tourism industry based on their ethnicity as one method with which to participate in modern Thai society.

Tourism has not been a panacea, and the Karen continue to face more challenges as this industry develops. The purpose of this thesis has been to examine the sustainability of ethnic tourism in Ban Raummit from the perspective of the Karen people. This chapter will summarize the findings of this thesis, as well as their implications for theory and practice. The research process and some directions for future research will also be discussed.

Summary of Findings

Each of the three objectives of this thesis have been realized. In Chapter Five the destination system of Ban Raummit was described. The nuclei of the attraction have been identified as the unique culture of the Karen people and their local environment. The main manifestation of this ethnic attraction in Ban Raummit is the elephant trek. The culture of the hill tribe as an attraction is enhanced by its local environment made up of teak and bamboo forests, mystic mountains, and terraced rice paddy fields. These attractions are supported by well-developed tourist facilities and infrastructure including restaurants, shops, and transportation networks. The location of this village makes it a convenient stop for both jungle treks and tribal village tour groups within the context of their broader itineraries through northern Thailand.

The second and third objectives of this study were addressed in Chapter Six. Three main challenges to the sustainability of the tourism industry in Ban Raummit were identified. First, as the village has modernized and the tourism industry has become more institutionalized, the tourists' perceptions of Ban Raummit as an authentic hill tribe village appear to have declined. This decline has accompanied the unplanned growth of a non-Karen front stage which impedes interactions between the Karen people and the tourists. The next challenge relates to the changing type of tourist who visit Ban Raummit. As the village has progressed in its evolution as a tourist destination, there has been a shift from the allocentric to mid-centric tourists. Yet, the Karen have done little to cater to the distinctive needs of either group. As a result, neither of these groups has been satisfied with their exposure to the Karen culture in this village.

Finally, a shift in the ethnic balance and commitment to community in Ban Raummit is creating resentment among the Karen villagers. The economic benefits of selling souvenirs to the tourists have brought many outside people to the village. The Karen people have begun to think that these groups receive substantial benefit from the tourists, but choose to give little back to the community. This attitude runs counter to the perception that the Karen people use a portion of their profit from the elephant treks to support community development projects. In addition, the presence of these groups is eroding the limited control that the Karen people have to direct the development of their village. As a result, resentment is intensifying.

Tourism has become an integral part of the economic system in this village, and the preceding challenges are serious impediments to the sustainability of this industry. A series of strategies have, therefore, been identified to address these issues. The first strategy is to maintain the status quo. This choice would do little to sustain tourism in this village. Focussing on the mid-centric tourist is the second strategy. This option has the potential to increase the satisfaction of this group of tourists and to prolong the visitation of this group. The final strategy is the restructuring of the existing front stage and the creation of a planned tourist cultural village. In addition to the elephant treks, this type of planned tourist space could fulfill an important role for both the trekking and sightseeing tourists. The restructuring of the front stage would also provide the Karen with an opportunity to address the mounting tension with the other ethnic groups who are perceived as having less commitment to the community.

By addressing each of the three objectives of this study, a greater understanding of the sustainability of ethnic tourism in Ban Raummit from the perspective of the Karen has emerged. Ethnic tourism in the Karen village of Ban Raummit appears to be a viable economic option for the villagers, yet challenges currently exist. Appropriate strategies should be implemented by the Karen to improve the sustainability of this option.

Thoughts on Methodology

The interpretive research paradigm used in this study was an appropriate choice. Considering the status of the Karen in Thai society, the reality experienced by them is significantly different from that of the other stakeholders in this industry. As their culture provides the nucleus of the attraction in Ban Raummit, they constitute the basis of the sustainability of this industry. Approaching the objectives of this thesis without acknowledging these differences would not have provided the important insights into the industry that have been gained through the use of the interpretive paradigm.

The case study design and the qualitative methods also allowed for a depth of understanding that would not have been possible with a more quantitative approach. Time spent living in the village was valuable. Because of the sustained presence of the researcher in the village, the Karen were able to share more information on their own terms. As the researcher became more involved in village life, the locals were more confident in approaching her. Many of the more revealing and important insights into Ban Raummit were generated during unplanned and spontaneous exchanges initiated by a Karen person.

However, the fieldwork could have been improved. Ideally, the researcher should have a working knowledge of the language of the local people. Having the ability to talk directly with the people would improve the understanding of the issues. When an interpreter is present, the respondent never truly talks to the researcher. Instead, the conversation occurs between the interpreter and the respondent. A trusting relationship between the researcher and the respondents is more difficult to achieve. Time spent participating in village activities was an essential component in this process. Learning another language is not always possible, or necessary, and the assistance of an interpreter is often adequate. Through this research experience though, it became obvious that having an interpreter who is fluent in the first languages of both the interviewees and the researcher would have been more effective. Many of the subtle nuances of the English language were difficult for the interpreters to understand and communicate. As more time was spent with the interpreters, a greater understanding between the researcher and the interpreters was also developing.

Further, this study would have been improved by having more time in the field. Gaining the trust of the Karen people was necessary to access the tribal perspective on issues. This goal was only beginning to be realized as the fieldwork came to an end. More time on site may have generated greater insights into the ethnic tourism industry of Ban Raummit. A minimum of 16 weeks in the village or research site would be beneficial. In addition, the opportunity to return to the research site for further data collection and clarification of the findings after a period of data analysis would help to triangulate the findings by ensuring that they fit the villagers perceptions of the situation.

Significance of the Study

This thesis has both applied and academic significance. The Karen people face real challenges as they integrate into Thai society. The ethnic tourism industry in this village has an important role in sustaining this community into the future by providing the community with economic opportunities for its residents. Many other tribal people are forced to leave their traditional villages in search of economic opportunities which will allow them to participate in mainstream Thai society. Because of the opportunities created by tourism in Ban Raummit, Karen people can stay in this village and continue to evolve as a living culture. In addition, the destination system allows the Karen to showcase elements of their culture for their own people and for the appreciation of other people. For these reasons, it is important that the Karen identify and implement strategies that will enhance the sustainability of ethnic tourism in Ban Raummit.

Tourism proponents argue that sustainable tourism development must achieve certain goals. It should meet the needs of the local community, satisfy the demands of the tourists, and protect the resources that the tourists have come to see (Hunter, 1995; Pearce, 1995). To achieve these outcomes, destinations must limit the infrastructure development in a destination and increase local control (Dearden, 1995; Pearce, 1995). The findings of this study would support these arguments. Uncontrolled development in Ban Raummit has compromised the attractiveness of this destination to various tourist groups. If this trend continues, fewer tourists will consider this to be an appealing destination to learn about the tribal people.

Increased local control has also been identified as a major issue in Ban Raummit. Tourism offers these villagers an opportunity to increase the limited control that they have over the future developments of their village. The increased income provided by the tourism operations has allowed the villagers to undertake a number of community development projects. Currently, the Karen perceive that this control is being eroded by the presence of other groups in the village. As a result of this perception, tensions are growing between the various groups. If this tension is left unchecked, the negative impacts of tourism may soon outweigh the positive impacts, and the villagers' reactions toward the tourists will become less hospitable.

Butler's (1980) cycle was a helpful tool with which to map the progression of Ban Raummit as a destination. It also provided an effective tool with which to illustrate the possible outcomes of future management decisions in this village. Rather than the standard "S" shape predicted by Butler's cycle, this village had a very slow progression through the exploration and development stage because not many of the villagers considered tourism to be a desirable method of income generation. It was not until about 1993 when the village agreed to let other groups of people come to the village as vendors that the village started to experience rapid changes. This management decision quickly thrust the village into a rapid and, graphically "steep", stage of consolidation. At that point, resentment began to develop in the village, but not toward the tourists, more toward the outside vendors.

As Ban Raummit has moved through its cycle of evolution, many of Dearden's

(1991) predictions on possible impacts have occurred. As the number of tourists has increased, so too has the level of tourism facilities and infrastructure. The tourists' perception of authenticity in this village has correspondingly decreased with the changes. At the same time, this cycle did not predict the continuing local control over the attraction nucleus. The central attraction of this destination is the Karen culture manifested in the elephant treks. The villagers continue to purchase and manage these elephants on their own. In addition, a portion of the revenue from this attraction continues to be reinvested into this village. It is this aspect of the tourism system in Ban Raummit that continues to benefit the community.

The sustainability of tourism in this village is as dependent on political issues as it is on economic issues. The Karen maintain a low level of status and power in Thai society. Many political decisions made by the Thai government have major impacts on the Karen lives, yet the Karen perceive that they have little control over these decisions. Decisions regarding land ownership and land uses are made outside the village with little input from the villagers. The villagers of Ban Raummit seem to feel that the extra income earned with the tourism industry in this village provides them with a degree of control over the village development that other villages do not have. Although, it does little to address the more overriding issues of land tenure and land use, tourism provides one method with which to gain further access to the power system of Thai society.

Dearden and Harron (1994) suggest that "it is difficult, if not impossible, to foresee an ongoing, sustainable trekking industry based solely on ethnic tourism" (p. 98). The findings of this study would not support that statement in Ban Raummit. Instead of entering the decline stage of Butler's evolution (1980), Ban Raummit has the potential to be rejuvenated as an ethnic tourism destination. Admittedly, this village will no longer attract Cohen's (1979a) experiential tourist searching for an authentically primitive "other." But, this type of tourist no longer comprises the bulk of the tourists visiting northern Thailand. Instead, most of Thailand's tourists would be considered mid-centric tourists with less critical expectations of authenticity. Under Smith's (1996) definition of ethnic tourism as "the visitor industry which directly involves native peoples whose ethnicity is a tourist attraction," Ban Raummit's role as an ethnic tourism destination is likely to be a viable one.

With the application of appropriate strategies to redirect the evolution of this tourism attraction by the Karen people, this village will provide tourists with an unique opportunity to experience a living culture.

Future Research

The findings of this research, though adding to the existing body of knowledge, have also generated more questions. Areas that require further investigation include the following:

- The existence of a healthy tourism industry in Ban Raummit gave the villagers a perception of increased control over their future. What impression do the mainstream Thai people have of this situation and what is their response?
- This study suggests that the mid-centric tourists would be motivated to visit an ethnic tourism attraction of this sort. An in-depth study of visitor motivations would help tribal villages to continue providing appropriate services to the tourist groups.
- As the countries surrounding Thailand such as Laos and Vietnam continue to open their borders to tourism, what will be the impact on ethnic tourism in Thailand? What role can the more modern villages in Thailand perform within this ethnic tourism context?
- Leiper (1990) would argue that tourist demand is influenced by markers (eg. promotions). How can markers be altered so that they increase the demand to see living cultures, rather than creating a demand for the often staged versions of primitive cultures?

Final Thought

Ethnic tourism creates opportunities. The opportunities are not only to generate revenue. In the case of Ban Raummit, it also creates the opportunity for the Karen villagers to continue to evolve as a living culture. Ethnic tourism creates the opportunity for people from other cultures to learn about the Karen and about themselves. Through this knowledge may come increased understanding and acceptance of difference. It is only with an attitude of curiosity, humility and respect that hosts and travellers can hope to approach these opportunities.

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